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of our ancestors, and that they may gain inspiration from our legends, traditions and heritages and the history of the world that repose in this bundle of the Flat Pipe as the Indian race understands your creation of the world. So that my grandchildren may learn to have that strong character possessed by our ancestors and their utmost sincerity of purpose of [and?] the true philosophy of life on earth. And that they may merge this sterling character into the life of this day and age.

"As I stand here today, I am fully conscious and fully realize that the White man is here to stay. And that we, the Indians, must live according to his way of life.

"I pray that White Shield [Cooper] may be restored back to good health. And I pray that Chief Woman [Flannery] may live a long, and a healthy, happy life. I pray that the Black-Robed missionaries of St. Paul's Mission [the Jesuit Fathers] may succeed in their efforts to teach us the true way of life. I pray that our leaders of the Indian people may be inspired to do good work for their people.

"My Father, I talk to you today with all of my person, and with all my heart and my mind. I give You thanksgiving for hearing my weak and mortal voice, and from my heart I ask You to again listen to my prayer, which I am making most devoutly and which is my most earnest wish."[8]

The question as to when the Gros Ventres prayed has been partly answered passim in the treatment of the sacred Pipe rituals, the sacred Dances, ghost helpers, and power. We shall here include other occasions and situations calling for or accompanied by prayer: spring time, mealtime, bedtime, hunting, river crossing, storms, the aged.

The Gros Ventres prayed, as occasion arose, at all seasons of the year, but spring time was looked upon as a particularly propitious time not only for seeking power, but also for other kinds of praying. The point of view may be illustrated by excerpts from a letter of March 24, 1945, from The Boy to Cooper. The letter was not just dashed off hurriedly or without previous thought. For composing it, The Boy explained orally the following summer to

[8] School Sisters of St. Francis, 1946, pp. 3-4.

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782 123 Flannery: "I tried to be well prepared by a long period of study as to what to tell him [Cooper] so that I could do something big for his health, that his health might be restored. I sort of prepared for this all winter long and then decided I would write this letter to him in the Spring of the year when everyone seems to feel good and [to be] glad that they are still living and that they survived the hardships of the winter and that it is time for rejoicing and that even the animals are glad that spring had come around again. They then woke up from their long sleep of hibernation when they bored underground or under a pile of rocks or whichever way they could get away from . . . winter. I tried to get him [Cooper] the full benefit of it. I am glad to hear he liked it. I tried hard to put into words what I wanted for my friend [Cooper], and so that he would get more I chose that time of the year [spring]. That is when all the animals wake up and talk and sing and move around and let the whole world know: 'I am still around too.' . . . They have made a real effort to live that long. . . . They try to keep themselves in existence as long as they can by growing and singing and running and so forth. . . . If I made my friend feel better and was able to master the great distance between us [Montana to Washington, D. C.] with those few words, I am exceedingly glad and will always feel good when I recall that letter and those words because they made him feel good. Besides my words written down, everything that I had went with them."

191 218 The Boy's message in the letter, as translated very carefully from his dictation in Gros Ventre and written down by his nephew, Thomas Main, was in part as follows:

123 539 782 "Dear friend—As winter is over and spring is on in its place, it makes one feel good. And as I listen to the talking song of the meadow larks they bring back pleasant memories of my association with you. So I am writing this letter to bring my thoughts into expression.

"I hope I can infuse and saturate into this paper my feelings for you and my concern for your welfare and doctor you with the tidings and blessings which the season of spring always brings, when all nature arises from a long sleep, so that you too may enjoy the healing winds and sunshine which abound at this time.

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"I have heard that your health [has not been good] . . . and it is my earnest hope that you may get back your health. I shall never forget nor cease to appreciate the encouragement you gave me when I was losing my health rapidly, and your promise to pray for me so that my health might be restored back to me.[6] I sincerely believe that your prayer was heard, as my health seems to be improving, even in my advancing age.

"So now it is my turn to pray that your life span may be extended, and among other good things to which you apply your mind that you may further contribute to the great study of the races and peoples of the earth.

"I have told you in my story of the Gros Ventres before the days of the white man, which includes the belief of my ancestors, that in the spring of the year is when one's prayers are more readily heard, and that was the time that the Indians in the long ago went to the hills, streams and mountain tops to fast and pray.

"We, the Gros Ventres, pray and implore the Supreme Being to protect our boys fighting on the various fronts in this great war, and so far only one Gros Ventre boy has been killed, out of many who are in the service. And we also pray that this terrible war and this mass killing may soon stop and that a just and lasting peace may be declared, so that the great family of nations may be true brothers again and go on with life in harmony and prosperity.

. . .

"I will now close and I am very glad to have spoke to you on this paper and it is my sincere hope that you can feel my words, so that they will do you good and doctor you.[7] With a good and hearty handshake, I am

Your friend
The Boy"

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In the spring, The Boy's father, Lame Bull, would at bedtime after all were lying down, sing certain songs after first praying for himself, his household and all the people. Whether this bedtime

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[6] See p. 366, in references to The Boy's illness in 1940. In 1948, The Boy again mentioned gratefully Cooper's prayer for him. [R.F.]

[7] Some of the expressions used in this letter seem to be implicit references to the efficacy of the sincere wish as well as of prayer.

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782 [511] praying and singing were done at other seasons of the year and how far as a more general custom by other fathers of families were points we did not clear up.

[264] Before eating food, at least in any more or less formal gathering, a portion of the food was offered up with prayer.

[224] Prayer rites and observances for good hunting were few and simple—as compared, for example, with the numerous and complicated ones practiced by the Algonquian-speaking tribes of the taiga. Abundance of food, which principally meant game food, was commonly prayed for. Two of the Sacred Dances, the Law Enforcers' and the Woman's, had as a purpose success in buffalo hunting. But beyond this, hunting entered little into ritual, and we may recall hunting was conspicuously absent from the power quest. We recorded no rites or observances whatever in connection with the gathering of berries, roots or other plant food.

[484] It was customary on crossing rivers to pray to the Last Child for protection, and to throw into the water offerings, especially shells and eagle-tail feathers, for the Last Child, or the water monster, or both, with some words such as, "I give you this." Sometimes, too, some prayer and offering would be made by a person going to swim, or on other occasions of water hazard.

During or just before severe thunderstorms, various prayer and other procedures were resorted to, many of them directed to Bha'a, the storm being.

Seeking indirectly or asking directly the prayers of the aged, especially for long life, took several different forms, and played an important role in Gros Ventre life, as we have explained elsewhere.

There were many different ways of seeking the prayers of the aged. We recorded the following, which may or may not exhaust the list: crying before a lodge, offering a pipe, promising a sweat-lodge, "holy boiling," providing a feast, doing favors of various kinds.

782 888 "Holy boiling," to which we have not as yet referred, was an observance distinct both from the preceding ones and from feasting a group of aged people. It was intended primarily for some one person, man or woman, although others partook of the meal, and

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could be offered by women as well as men. The person doing the "holy boiling" would have in mind the attainment of success in life. To be chosen as the person for whom the "holy boiling" was done was looked upon as a "great compliment" by the old man or old woman—it was always a very old person—so chosen. 782 ● 888

The Boy described one such holy boiling, done by a woman in fulfillment of a vow (men too could make such a vow). The following is a summary:

The vowing woman (the hostess) chose a particular old woman (the guest of honor) to do the praying for her at this holy boiling, and after cooking a lot of food notified the old woman of the choice and invited a number of women friends. No men participated. On arrival, all sat down,—with the chosen old woman in the place of honor and the others in their places, and with food placed before each. The old woman took some cooked dog, held it up, and prayed in four directions. Then she gave four little pieces to the hostess and told her: 'Bury these in four spots, north, east, south, and west, inside the lodge.' The hostess did so, and then prayed, mentioning the Last Child, and buried a bit of food where she was. Then the other women present, on being invited, prayed each a short prayer and buried a bit of food, pushing it under the dirt, and included the Last Child in the prayer. Then all ate.

Very like "holy boiling" was offering a feast to a *group* of old men and old women. (In "holy boiling" some one old man or woman was *the* guest of honor.) The custom is still observed among the Gros Ventres. "A young man," The Boy said, who had witnessed such feasts, "would tell his wife to cook a lot of choice things and then would invite a number of people to the feast, old men and old women. He would send the crier to shout out loud: 'So-and-So [the host] invites you, So-and-So [names of the invited guests]. Come to his lodge.' The people would understand: 'That fellow is inviting old people.' These very old people, some perhaps blind or with canes, would come and sit down, without any religious rite. They would realize what the host was doing, appreciate his inviting them and not looking down on them, and would say: 'This man is pitying us. He is giving us a good meal and smoke and treating us well. Let us pray for him.' . . . Then

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782 888 one of the old men would take a plate or cup of some choice food and hold it up (not praying with a pipe) and pray, before the food was distributed to the various guests, to the Supreme Being (but not mentioning the Last Child) for the young man host's entire family or household, . . . that there would be no sorrow or suffering in the family, that they would have long life, that the household would stand firm and tight, and that the children would be healthy and good and successful. Then the old man would set the plate of food down and food would be distributed to all the old people. . . . Some old person would then suggest: 'Let us all pray.' Then each, including the old man who had prayed, would take a little bit of food, hold it up to the Supreme Being . . . and all would pray audibly but in a low voice, so there was a sort of humming there, each using his or her own words . . . and each would wind up by mentioning the Last Child and pushing the bit of food in the earth. . . . All this praying by the old people was done spontaneously [not requested by the host] . . . and voluntarily . . . , but the young man would be disappointed if the old men and old women did not pray for him and his family. . . . If the old people prayed they always did so before they ate. After they ate would have been too late to pray."

Sacrifices

782 Sacrifice, in the more restricted sense of the term, may be defined as the giving or offering of some material possession, usually prized as of intrinsic or of symbolic worth, to a supernatural being or beings, the giving itself being signified by expropriation of the object through destruction, segregation, or other process. In a more inclusive sense, the offering may be of something non-material, such as privation or pain or self-torture voluntarily undergone. In this section on sacrifice we feel that we shall be closer to the Gros Ventre point of view if, under the caption sacrifice we include both offerings that come under either the restricted or the inclusive sense of the term. The Gros Ventres draw no sharp line between, offerings of, for instance, a blanket, a little finger, a minute bit of one's flesh, and some of the types of self-torture to be described. All are things offered to supernatural beings.

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The filled pipe offered with prayers comes clearly within our definition of sacrifice; incense and invitations to supernatural beings to sweat in sweat-lodge rites, probably so. On the other hand, wearing apparel and other objects buried with the dead were not sacrifices as they were not intended as offerings. When a person was going off to where he would have good food and drink, a stay-at-home relative or friend might laughingly say to him: "Don't forget me. Give me some food (or whiskey)." The one who went off would at the time of the meal hold up some food or drink in the direction of the stay-at-home and say: "Here's your food (or whiskey)," and would dip his finger tips in the whiskey and sprinkle it with his finger tips in the direction of the stay-at-home. The custom shares part of the pattern of certain first-fruit-sacrifices to be described presently, without of course being a sacrifice. 782●

Expropriation was symbolized or effected in many ways: by holding up the object, burying it, pouring it on the ground, sinking it in water, hanging it on trees or poles or lodges, positing it on the Sacred Pipes ("covering" them), laying it away up on the hills, giving it away to the needy,—never, so far as we recorded, by burning or other type of intentional destruction proper. Things buried or sunk in the water were not in the Gros Ventres concept "destroyed," but thereby given to the Last Child or water monster whose home was beneath the earth surface or under water.

In general, sacrifices were offered to nearly the same beings to whom prayers were addressed. Most frequently mentioned among the beings to whom offerings were made were, first and foremost the Supreme Being, then the Sun, the Earth, Bha'a, the Last Child, the water monster(s), the power-bestowing-beings, ghost helpers, Little Spirit, the Pictograph Beings, and certain sacred rocks and other natural objects, and, last but not least, the Sacred Pipes.

Among the more common objects offered were: food, usually in the form of "first-fruits," puppy meat and delicacies having symbolic value; tobacco; sweat-lodges and sweatbaths; articles of apparel and other daily use, especially robes, blankets, necklaces, earrings, beads, "pearls," eagle tail feathers; scalps; bits of flesh,

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782 finger joints; self-inflicted privations and sufferings; in one case to be mentioned (p. 388), life itself. All in all, food offerings, though common, seem to have been less prominent in the Gros Ventre sacrificial complex than were offerings of other things. Tobacco was the only offering drawn from the native flora. Bits of meat were offered as first fruit sacrifices, and puppy meat was offered ghost helpers. But there were no blood animal sacrifices proper, that is, no ritual sacrificial killing of animals. Such ritual sacrificial killing is, in other parts of the world, with rare exceptions of domesticated animals, of which the Gros Ventres had only two, dogs and horses, until very recent times. While the Gros Ventres prized puppy meat as a delicacy, they never ate horse meat. The horse entered in no way into the Gros Ventre sacrificial pattern, not even as a food offering. Puppy meat was essentially a food offering; puppies were not as such ritually killed as sacrifices.

Sacrifices were offered for about the same ends for which prayers were offered. They were made mostly to obtain blessings of the material and physical order: long life, abundance of the necessities of life, cure of illness, and so forth; not for gambling success, for moral strength, or for happiness in the future life. Thanksgiving was commonly expressed in sacrifices; likewise, implicitly at least, homage, recognition of dominion, reverence and affection, particularly but not exclusively in first-fruits food offerings. Among the scores of sacrifices we recorded we came across none made to ask forgiveness or offer atonement for moral, or even ritual, transgressions.

So much for generalizations. A great many specific types of sacrifice have been given passim in preceding pages on the Sacred Pipes, Sacred Dance, Ghost Helpers and Power. We are here adding some types of sacrifice not previously dealt with: first, some scattered types; then, in order, sacrifices of food (first fruits and puppy meat), and of person (flesh, finger, self-torture); and finally, the sweat-lodge, as commonly associated with sacrifice.

Offerings,—blankets, "pearls," and so forth,—were commonly thrown in water; regularly when crossing large rivers such as the Missouri, sometimes, ad libitum, when going swimming. These were more commonly made to the Last Child, or to the water

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monster(s) living under water by whom it may be recalled drowned persons are grabbed or taken. The offerings were made to pacify the water monster, apparently appease his greed and so avoid being captured and dragged down by him. Coming Daylight was always afraid of boats [bull boats] and when crossing a river would do so riding lodge poles or a log. Everybody used to laugh at her for this "because it looked more like the man's place to hang on the log" and her grandmother told her: "Don't ride on a log again, because this water bug [water monster] is certainly choicy about whom he picks on!" Cora Chandler explained: "Everybody says that when they put an offering in the water it disappears right away like somebody grabs it. And they say this water animal,—a bug that is supposed to have a kind of horn,—likes these 'pearls' such as Singer gave. Even nowadays people always want pearls to offer in the springs where they bathe. When anyone bathes in hot springs in Wyoming he always put in an offering just like in the old days."

When a young fellow was going off on a war party a sister or other relative might take a robe or other valuable object and put it on top of the lodge saying: "I offer this that my brother (or other relative) may come back with good luck and bring something."[a]

A young man, asking the prayers of an aged person, might be told by the latter to take eagle tail feathers or some other object out on the hills, hold up the object, to the Supreme Being and then to the sun, and pray for what was desired.

The offering of earrings to "Walking Rock" is mentioned infra. Mary Ereaux' grandmother, before smoking, would "offer tobacco to Mother Earth and the Sun."

Mary Ereaux also related the following experience, involving the offering of human lives: "I had just gotten out of the hospital after an operation and there were ten small lodges there and I stopped to talk to the people. An old man named Magpie jumped up and said: 'Here is Kills All [M. E.] back from the hospital.' I shook hands with him and his wife. He said: 'When we heard you had gone to the hospital for an operation we told Ixtcibni :hohat

[a] Cf. Flannery, 1953, pp. 112-13.

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782 [white man above, Our Father] in our prayer, so you would return safe: 'Oh, White Man Above, Our Father, spare her life. If you are going to take anybody, we are willing that you should take us in her place. She is young and has children and lives happy. But we two are old and starved anyway, so if you want to take anybody, take us.'

"I told him: 'An operation is not dangerous if you have it in time.' Strangely enough both he and his wife died within a month. It was just like he had bought my life. I feel badly even now when I think of it. Their one son married one of my daughters. . . . Old man Magpie was one of the old timers."

782 264 Food offerings, except perhaps the puppy meat given the ancestral spirit helper, were typical "first-fruits" sacrifices, made before eating. These offerings were regularly made, as we have seen, before any more or less formal, festive or ritual meal partaken of by a group, and at least very commonly before even everyday family meals at home. The latter everyday usage is explained in the following statement of informants:

Charles Buckman: "Before eating, a piece of meat is held up and so offered to the Master of All, and then is put on the ground."

Coming Daylight: "Whenever they [the Gros Ventres] eat and in their ceremonies, they never eat right away, but have a prayer, like this [here she held up her right hand]: 'Now here it is, I promised you, Our Father, the One Traveling [sun], and the Last Child.'"

The little chunks of food given in this first-fruits sacrifice rite to the Last Child were "pushed in the dirt or ground and sort of covered up with a little dirt,"—in the indoor modern rite previously described, deposited in cracks in the plank flooring.

782 As appears from the foregoing accounts considerable minor variations occurred in this first-fruits rite at meals.

The only first-fruits sacrifice connected with hunting proper, as distinct from eating, was the piece of liver and bit of fat deposited, as a thank offering to Little Spirit, on the west side of killed game.

[252 262] Puppy meat was looked upon by the Gros Ventres as a delicacy. Cooked puppy meat was commonly offered as food to ghost helpers on their visits. After the puppy was killed, the hair was

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singed off at a fire, and the insides taken out without skinning the animal; then it was quartered up and boiled.

In addition, Charles Buckman stated: "If a party went out to war and met the enemy, before the actual fighting began a man might promise to give grub and a feast to old people, and as part of the feast there had to be a dog,—a pup, of any color. After the party got back home [at the feast, before eating] four pieces of the dog meat were taken and held up and then set on [in] the ground, one each to the north, east, south and west. The pieces were held up as offered to God—in thanksgiving and as a prayer for future favors. Then the young man served the grub to the old people. Before eating they would say, 'O God, this young man has fulfilled the promise he made to you,' and they would pray for him."

What we may call, for want of a better name, sacrifices of person or somatic sacrifices, took three main forms: offerings of flesh, of finger joints, and of self-inflicted suffering and/or privation. Each of the first two is a sacrifice in the strict sense of the term; the third, in the broader sense. The gashing of arms, legs or face as a mourning custom was quite distinct in the Gros Ventre mind from the above flesh offering: it expressed sorrow, it was not in any sense a sacrifice or offering to the deceased. No sacrifices at all were connected with mourning. Nor were finger joints ever cut off as a mourning observance.*

In most instances recorded by us, these somatic sacrifices were made in fulfillment of vows for the cure or safety of a close relative of the vower,—as, it may be recalled, was the case with self-torturers in the Sacrifice Dance. There were exceptions however: in their respective quests for power, Bull Lodge cut off a finger joint, and Little Man, Al Chandler's adopted father, cut off bits of flesh; the other Little Man, Coming Daylight's husband, when suffering from hemorrhages and pains around the heart was told in dream that he would get well if he underwent solitary self-torture.

Women as well as men would make offerings of their flesh and finger joints. To judge from the records we obtained, the finger joint sacrifice was more frequently made by women than by men,

*Cf. Flannery, 1953, p. 205.

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782 785 304 the flesh sacrifice with about equal frequency by the two sexes. Ordinarily only a little of the woman's flesh was cut, small bits, as against the large bits or strips not infrequently cut from the man. Only men underwent solitary self-torture out in the hills.

With these generalizations on somatic sacrifices covered, we shall now take up specific features of the flesh, finger and self-torture sacrifices in order.

In the early archaic times Ni:hohat, as we have seen, gave detailed instructions on cutting off bits of flesh when explaining about the Flat Pipe sweat-lodge.

The rite was described by The Boy (Thick present and concurring) and, with some differences, by Singer, as follows:

The Boy (and Thick). "The cutting off of bits of flesh was a rite all to itself. A round hole was made in the ground for the heated rocks; a common sweat-lodge was erected; a mound was made of the dirt excavated to make the hole; a buffalo skull was put on the mound; and a pole was put up for offerings. . . . The one to be cut would get as an operator someone who had gone through the rite himself. . . . The cut off flesh was offered to the Supreme Being. . . . Usually the rite was undergone so that some sick person who was near and dear to the undergoer would get well. . . . The skin was not pierced but a piece of green branch was split in two, and the two pieces were pressed hard, parallel and not quite touching each other, on the skin making it rise up, and these raised strips were then cut off. . . . One of my grandfathers was all cut up, with two half circles on his chest, one half circle on the outer side of each shoulder, a double row of cuts—not little bits, but strips cut right down—on both his upper arms and forearms and legs from hip to ankle. All these cuts were made on a single occasion. It was thought he would die of this sacrifice but he did not. . . . I myself had four bits of flesh cut from my arm, and others [farther] up my arm. [He here bared his arm and showed the scars: they were not crescent shaped.] The first cutting was done when I was a child. I was told to look away when it was being done. Sometimes children would run away and hide when told it was to be done to them. . . . Only three or four years ago [this would be about 1935-36] an old man so cut off

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a young man's skin back of Thomas Main's house." (The cut off pieces of skin were, as at the Sacrifice Lodge, placed on the buffalo skull, "as an offering of the [person's] very body.")

Singer. "For cutting offerings of flesh from the arms they usually tried to get the same doctor who cut off my finger joint (see infra). He would take the flesh, put a needle through it and cut the flesh off. . . . He would then put the cut-off flesh in one of the bags from around the buffalo or cow heart which were used to carry water, and would hang it up or bury it. Women could not do the flesh cutting for themselves; they had to have a man doctor to do it. You promise so to torture yourself for some reason such as the wish to save the life of your sister or brother or other relative. For instance, if some young fellows were going off on a war party, the sisters would get out and make some such promise as: 'I will give part of my flesh or my finger if my brother comes back a great warrior.' It was great to have somebody [some relative] come back a hero, a brave man, or, as they called it, a big chief. . . . A wife could do this for her husband but usually it was a sister who thought that much of her brother. . . .

"I have a scar on my left upper arm [which she showed]. I had made this promise for the recovery of one of my daughters who was ill. A sick person is doctored, but such a promise is made as a last resort. Lame Bull told me they were going to make a big cut, like the ones they made on men. The cutting was done in a sweat-lodge where they all sat and prayed. They blackened the spot on my arm with charcoal,[10] then clipped the flesh off and held it up to the sun and said: 'This is what we offered you.' He cut me in four places on each arm. My husband was mad because it was too much. The one place on my left arm where the scar is was cut deeper than the others. After I made that promise I had the cutting done right away. [Mary Ereaux, our interpreter, here interrupted: "Goodness, you might just as well have done like the Sacrifice Dancers. You tortured yourself just as badly."] I held myself in but they certainly hurt me. They did not put anything on the wounds, only the charcoal beforehand. People try to

[10] Blackening sacrifices was a common (perhaps *the* regular) Gros Ventre procedure.

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785 take anything like that very patiently" ["Like our Lord being
304 crucified," Mary Ereaux commented].

Very much the same procedure as regards the sweat-lodge, buffalo skull and so forth was ordinarily followed when a finger joint was amputated. The cut-off joint was offered commonly to the sun, or to the Supreme Being. The operation regularly took place inside a sweat-lodge. "A joint from any finger could be offered up, but usually it was the first joint of the little finger of the left hand. The offerer would put his or her finger on a log or stone; the operator, someone skilled in the matter, would then place a knife on the joint and hit the knife with something heavy. [752] Sage was put on the wound, to stanch the flow of blood and help healing. Children in their play, it may be added, would in make-believe cut off little fingers, apply sage and so forth.

The finger amputation complex may be illustrated by Singer's experience:

"My infant daughter [one of her three children by Iron Bucket] had been ill. I sacrificed [in a delayed fulfillment of her vow] the end joint of the little finger of my left hand. . . . I said: 'I give you this. This is what I sacrifice to save my child's life.' This I said to the sun which is God's work, His property like. . . . I held the baby and my husband prayed: 'Sun, she has given you her finger so our child's life will be saved.' . . .

"The rite was private, not a big ceremony. We went out of the lodge and the sun was about half way up and he [apparently the operator] held up my whole left hand and said: 'Now, Passing or Traveling Man, this is what she is going to give you.' There was just one old man who cut off fingers. They claimed he had [this power from] a dream. . . . He was the father of Dwarf; Dwarf died just recently.

"They had me lie face down and the others held me so I would not move. The old man [Dwarf's father] . . . told me to relax, . . . felt around, found the joint, put my finger over the lodge pole and chopped it [the end joint only] off. I did not see it but I heard when he hit the lodge pole. But there was no pain. Then they let me sit up.

"The old man said: 'Do you want it to bleed, or shall I close

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it up right away?' My husband said, 'Let it bleed,' because he was afraid it would be sore if it didn't bleed. So when the old man thought it had bled enough, he chewed some big-leaf sage, made a poultice, and put it on my finger (and/or "sprinkled powdered root on my finger," she added later). It healed quickly and never troubled me. . . . We had to give the old man something for doing that. . . . My daughter lived to be a young woman."

Self-torture out on the hills,—"sacrifice alone on hills," as it was called,—had much in common with self-torture at the Sacrifice Dance. The chief difference was that, unlike the Sacrifice Dance torture rite, it was done in solitude. The self-torturer had to have a ritual grandfather, a man who himself had previously undergone this solitary self-torture—this in contrast to flesh and finger cutting in which there were no ritual grandfathers. The "grandfather-grandson" relationship so contracted persisted after the rite was over. Coming Daylight and The Boy were in agreement that the solitary self-torture was a more severe ordeal than self-torture at the Sacrifice Dance.

Those mentioned by our informants as having gone through "sacrifice alone on the hills" were: Stiffarm; Running Crow (Stiffarm as his "grandfather" for this rite); Coming Daylight's husband Little Man (Running Crow as his "grandfather"); her cousin White Skunk, son of Crow Bull; The Boy's brother; Jim Shortman; and perhaps Sits-in-the-Middle. On Stiffarm's, Running Crow's, and Sits-in-the-Middle's experience we obtained no details; on White Skunk's, no details beyond the fact that he underwent it "because my [Coming Daylight's] son was sick at the mission school: that son died anyway," and that he did "right on this hill here [at Hays]." The detailed accounts of Little Man's experience as narrated by Coming Daylight, of The Boy's brother's as narrated by The Boy, and of Jim Shortman's as narrated by himself, to be given now, will help to fill out the generalized picture of the rite in the preceding paragraph.

Coming Daylight's account of Little Man's "sacrifice alone on the hills," given in separate fragments on four different days, is here presented just as she gave it.

"My husband Little Man [Deafie] went out to the hills. When

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782 785 304 anyone so goes to be tortured someone else goes along. It was awful when they so went to pray and cry and sacrifice themselves. Running Crow went with Little Man, as the latter's grandfather, to pierce his breast and insert the skewers whereby he was attached to the pole by a thong. [After that was done] Running Crow gave Little Man a push and Little Man danced round and round the pole. Running Crow and Stiffarm, who went out with him [just as helper, not as grandfather], left Little Man, as was customary, alone. Then sometime during the day the two returned and gave Little Man a smoke, but the latter did not eat or drink anything. He would be hungry and thirsty and would run around without even moccasins on his feet. It is an awful sacrifice. He would dance until the skewer pulled out of his flesh. Then he would be tired and would sleep and dream.

"Little Man went through this rite on account of a dream. He had been sick [heart pains and hemorrhages] and had dreamed he was going through the rite, and in consequence did later actually carry it out. He carried it out at Chinook where we were all living at the time. During the rite his mother sang war songs in her camp.

"Little Man had not tortured himself in any big celebration [Sacrifice Dance]. He did this only alone on the hills. It is hardest this latter way. It takes longer to break off [for the skewer to tear through the flesh] in the heat [sic]. It is awfully hot out in the hills and the self-torturer goes barefoot, without moccasins. He dances west to east, counter clockwise, from sun up to sun down. It is not so hot in the lodge at the big celebrations [Sacrifice Dances]. It is a greater thing to do it alone.

"The time my husband, Little Man, did this I too was away on the hills. I pitied my old man [husband] and did not eat. I came home in the evening to cook for him. We always help a relative when he fasts like that. My husband's mother and sister were at home together with another woman relative, Ed Blackbird's wife."

[787] After Little Man's self-torture was over, he was told in a dream the exact kind of leaf (or root) to use for curing his hemorrhages and just where it was to be found, Coming Daylight was able to find it, and Little Man was cured.

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The Boy's narrative of his older brother's experience gives insight into the brother's feelings during the ordeal as well as detailed information on the rite itself. His brother had undergone self-torture once at a Sacrifice Dance and twice alone on a hill. The occasion of one of the two solitary rites was the following. Lame Bull had adopted a young boy who grew up as one of the family and proved himself worthy. The adopted boy and The Boy's older brother, both now dead, were sort of favorite sons of Lame Bull. The adopted son suddenly became mentally unbalanced. It was for his cure that The Boy's older brother vowed solitary self-torture. After the fulfillment of the vow the adopted son recovered.

The older brother, before the solitary rite, gave a pipe to a man to pray with and to announce out loud the coming rite and the name of the "grandfather" selected. At the end of the prayer the announcer released the pipe to the ritual grandfather who then took charge of the rite, piercing the vower and later cutting him loose.

The skewer punctures were made by first plunging a big awl into the skin on the side of the chest, the vower lying on his back. Then with the awl the skin was raised up, and a knife plunged point first right through the skin at right angles to the awl,—making in all three perforations of the skin, one by the awl and two by the knife point. Then the knife was withdrawn, the stick or skewer was pushed through at once while the holes were fresh, and finally the awl was withdrawn. One end, slashed, of a buckskin thong was put over the two projecting ends of the skewer, and the other end attached to the top of the pole anchored on the hill or knoll.

With the thongs so attached to the pole and the skewers [in the vower's chest, right and left side], the vower walked and ran, from sunrise to sunset, clockwise, starting at the south and ending there, then counter-clockwise, all through the day. He would go around so often that he would make a trail there.

The brother's feelings, as described by him to The Boy, are here given in The Boy's words:

"Out on the hill was the most severe [as compared with the Sacrifice Dance] for the reason that he had to do it all alone. From time to time he would rest, exhausted and crying. [When going]

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he would stretch himself good and tight [the thongs taut, his body weight pulling on them]. When he rested and wanted to relax and let the thongs go slack, the pain was worse than when they were taut. The skin over the skewer would dry up (and would work toward the living skin). . . . At sundown my brother's 'grandfather' came to him, and the toughest part of all occurred. My brother had not during the day tried to break loose [by body pull to make the skewer sever the skin], as at the Sacrifice Dance, for his 'grandfather' was to cut his skin loose. My brother all but died when he was cut loose. It was as if his heart was being cut. And at night, after both the Sacrifice Dance and the solitary ordeal, the pain was so intense, as if there were two red hot coals there [where the flesh was cut], that he could not sleep."

Jim Shortman (died 1948), probably the last Gros Ventre living who had gone through the solitary self-torture rite, gave the following account of his experience:

"The sticks [skewers for thongs] were about three inches long. (Here Jim undid his shirt to show the scars which were still visible on his chest.) My helper [ritual grandfather] was Running Crow. He was the man who fixed me up, pierced my flesh and fastened the thongs. My self-torture alone took place on a hill way out.

"My first struggle and ordeal in all that I was to do was to follow a command by Running Crow for me to go to the stream and break off a quaking aspen tree, but not to cut it with knife or axe,—to break it off in some way and bring to where I was going to do the fasting. So I went and twisted and worked and wore the ground just smooth around the tree with my efforts, and finally I got it down and twisted it off. I put a rope around it and dragged it to the scene of the fasting, and I had to accomplish this before sun-up of that day.

"So Running Crow went with me on my way to the scene of the fasting, which was a little west of where I and Paul Shortman now live. Just to the right of it is a little ridge. That is where I did it. The reason I vowed to do this was because my mother was at the point of death. She was very sick and I carried out my vow and she got well.

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"Paddy Skinner came along to help Running Crow dig a hole and fix in it the pole I had twisted off and tamp it in the ground securely. After they put up that pole or tree, Running Crow tied all of my offerings up there on top and also fastened the rope that was to be secured to the sticks in my chest.

"After this tree was made secure in the ground, Running Crow told me to take my clothes off, which I did, and he made a paste of white clay and painted my body with it. So these two men told me to lie down on my back and face my head towards the rising sun. Then they took a knife, and a big needle in the other hand, and lifted the skin on my upper arm and cut off seven pieces of my skin. Then they did that to my other arm. This made fourteen pieces in all. They put these pieces they had cut off at the foot of this tree. Then they cut off seven more pieces on the outside of each of my thighs, and by that time it began to hurt.

"Then last they cut my chest, the right side first. They pierced me there with the blade of a pocket knife and pushed the stick [skewer] in as soon as he released the blade. Then they repeated this on my left side. They told me to stand up so they fastened the thongs onto these sticks. Running Crow did that.

"Then after these things were securely fastened, Running Crow put the palm of his hand on my chest and pushed me four times to make the ropes tight. He stepped to my right side and pushed me four times too, and at the same time he told me: 'Now you begin your fasting and your actual performance of your vow and you must begin by crying.' And I did all that. And Running Crow told me: 'Go around this pole, round and round clockwise, and when you get tired you can lie down or sit down anyway you find restful, but always keep the ropes tight and do not loosen them, much less take them off.'

"Finally I got tired and I thought I would lie down and rest, and I did lie down but I did not rest well. In fact it seemed to be worse. Even the wind making the thongs sway hurt me. I had started out without eating or drinking anything. I was fasting. I had a terrible ordeal, to say the least, but I found that when I pulled tight [pulled the body away from the pole and kept the thongs taut] I suffered less.

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"Just before the sun went down that day, all at once I felt something touching me on my left side. It was Running Crow and the other man who stopped me. This meant that my fasting and chastizing myself were about over.

"They took off those thongs and told me to lie down in the same position that they had told me to lie in at the beginning. That is when I suffered the most. They did not take the sticks out, but just cut those thongs off and it seemed to me as if they were cutting my heart. Those fellows took those pieces that my skin was still clinging to and buried them at the foot of the post. And that is my experience. They told me to put on my clothes and I did so. I did not experience or perceive anything out of the ordinary. I just suffered. That is all.

"After I put on my clothes I found out that the skin of my feet was worn off and blistered and sore, and they sure hurt me. And to add to my aches, on the soles of my feet I was awfully sore the next morning and couldn't walk. And that is the end of my experience."

Sweat-Bath

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In Gros Ventre ritual, sweating and sacrificing were quite closely associated. Invitations to sweat extended to the Supreme Being and other beings in certain sweat-lodge rites,[11] such as those connected with the Flat and Feathered Pipe ceremonies, were of the nature of gifts or offerings, and hence sacrifices in the broader sense of the term. Then, too, the sweat-lodge and sweat-bath were a chosen medium for making offerings or consummating the sacrificial rite: the pole erected in front of the sweat-lodge and the buffalo skull on the adjacent mound were intended particularly for the attachment to and disposition of respectively sacrificial objects,—offerings of robes, bits of flesh, and so forth. Furthermore, the sweat-lodge was a preferred place in which to make sacrifices of flesh and of finger joints.

On other occasions too sweat-lodge and sacrifice went together. For instance, a man whose son had been killed by the enemy might

[11] Kroeber, 1908, pp. 274-75, gives an account of sweating and mentions that "Above-white-man" was called first.

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offer a pipe to a band chief and ask him to avenge the son's death. The chief would accept the pipe and pray to the Supreme Being for success in the revenge expedition. Then the father would erect a sweat-lodge and make offerings in connection therewith, inviting a lot of "holy" old men to sweat and likewise to pray to the Supreme Being for success in the expedition.

Al Chandler gave the following account: "A young fellow would go and tell some old medicine man that he was going to make a sweat-bath for him so that the old man would pray for him, and would ask him what he [the young man] should do, whether there was a certain special way of performing the ceremony, and how the sweat-lodge should be fixed. The medicine men had all different ways. Some medicine men would have, say, 18 willows at least for the sweat-lodge framework, or others 26, or 30 at the most, with four willows called the 'head frame' oriented toward the sunrise, or the north, or other direction. A hole about six inches deep was dug inside for the heated rocks and the surface cleared about an inch down from the hole to the door. On this cleared space, shaped more or less like a truncated triangle, some design in red paint might be drawn—such as a circle, or figure of a bird or man. A dozen different men might follow one particular set of specifications in case they had all gotten the right to do so from the same [medicine] man.

"The fire for heating the rocks was made about 8 to 10 feet from the door of the sweat-lodge, and the dirt dug to make the hole in the lodge was put in a nice pile about 4 to 5 feet beyond the fireplace on the same axis therewith. The offerings made by the young fellow—such as calico or feathers—were tied on a willow stick about 6 or 7 feet long. He had also to get the rocks, to no specified number.

"When all was ready the old fellow would tell the young man to get, say, 7 to 9 old men to come and join them. When they arrived, the rocks were all heated. The young man then gave the old man [the one he had first approached] the willow stick with the offerings tied to it. The old man then went to the dirt pile, faced in the direction in which the lodge faced, and holding the offerings on [over?] the pile prayed as loud as he could: 'God,

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515 782 come and listen to me. God, come and get in the sweat-bath with me. Here is what X [naming the young man] gives you as an offering!' Then he would go on to pray for the young fellow and would tell who had given him [the old man] power to make the sweat-bath this particular way: 'You gave me this for some purpose, so you must come and help me now. This young man has gone to a lot of trouble to do this for me and you. So listen to me and help this young man, whatever his wish is.' Then he stuck the offering in the dirt pile, to remain there while they were all inside the lodge sweating.

"After he and the invited old men got inside the lodge, he would appoint one of them to pour the water on the heated rocks. The appointee would ask, 'How much for the start,' and would be told, [801] 'Four times' or maybe 'Seven times,' either four or seven. The appointee would then pour, the required number of times, just enough, say about one third of or a whole cupful, to make a little steam. Then the leading old fellow would say: 'Now it is up to you. Pour any amount you want.'

"Then all those old men prayed inside for the young man, who remained outside and had to look after the rocks and the opening up of the sweat-lodge. Every so often he had to open it up in front and back and so kind of cooled the sweaters off. It was so opened maybe four successive times, and then the sweating was over.

"The young fellow might then be told to come in, and the old fellows would kind of clean him by first blowing on their hands and then rubbing him, and when they were through they would twiddle their fingers as one does to get rid of dirt.

"This young man hired all these people and he would think that these old men prayed hard, and that he would get what he asked for, and that he would not be afraid, and that regardless of odds he would come out on top because of this faith."

The ritual cleansing effected by sweating as well as the sacrificial aspect of the rite is definitely referred to in the foregoing account, but here as in most other cases the sacrificial aspect is the more prominent. The cleansing effect was also hinted at in Sitting High's remark quoted by Al Chandler: "You have to clean yourself through this sweating."

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The sweat-bath was resorted ritually on many occasions other than those mentioned in the immediately preceding pages and passim in preceding sections. Coming Daylight spoke of it in a general way as "the thing they [the Gros Ventres] go through with when they don't want something to happen." On some of these many occasions reported by our informants there was no mention of accompanying offerings,—for instance the many sweat-baths Singer made for her sick husband (or were these purely "rational" curative measures, as may have been the sweating Coming Daylight went through for her rheumatism?). The sweat-lodge was commonly used, especially as we have seen, in connection with professional doctoring.

The sweat-bath was resorted to rather commonly—how commonly we cannot say—for pleasure, as a purely rational hygienic and curative measure, and for cleanliness. In such cases, no ceremony at all was connected with it. The keepers of the Flat and Feathered Pipes, if known to like sweating,—but not otherwise,—could be invited, but without ritual accompaniment. There was no mixed-sex sweating; men sweated with men, women with women. Sweating was a little hard on novices unused to the heat and steam. The white man who asked to learn about the Feathered Pipe was told: "The first night in a sweat-bath is pretty hard and beginners are allowed to lie down close to the ground." Singer, once when being washed by a medicine man, had to leave the lodge as soon as the water was poured on the stones; she could not stand the heat. Mary Ereaux' mother used to keep her head outside the sweat-lodge when sweating. Those, however, habituated to sweating, found the after-effect pleasant and soothing. As Al Chandler expressed it: "After you are all through sweating you sure feel good. You could go right to sleep."

The sweaters during the sweating whipped themselves,—"to make them even hotter" (Al Chandler), "to dry themselves" (Coming Daylight)—with formerly a whip made of a buffalo tail attached to a handle, or later of "a horse tail or any old thing."

The sweat-lodge for secular use was always beehived shaped, of bent willows framework, but no special number of willows was required.

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Vows

732 Vows—here understood as promises of objects or acts made to supernatural beings—were prominent features of Gros Ventre religious life. They were distinguished in Gros Ventre thinking from promises, however serious, made to human beings. Thus, for example, a promise by a woman to make a decorated robe for her son-in-law, a quite serious promise, was specifically stated to be a promise only, not a vow.

Most of the numerous specific vows we recorded were made directly or indirectly to the Supreme Being; some, to the sacred Pipes; others, especially many of those involving physical pain,—flesh cutting, finger amputation, self-torture alone or in a Sacrifice Dance,—to the sun.

The most common occasion of vows was illness or other danger to life of one of the vower's close relatives or of the vower himself or herself. Other occasions specifically mentioned were success in a revenge expedition, achievement in battle, the return of a captured wife.

The things—object and/or acts—most frequently mentioned as vowed were: covering, opening, smoking, dancing with, making a sweat-lodge for, accepting the keepership of, or rendering other homage to the Flat or Feathered Pipe; holding one of the sacred Dances; cutting one's flesh, amputating one's finger joint, or undergoing self-torture alone or in a Sacrifice Dance; "holy boiling," or feeding a group of the poor, old men and old women; more recently, giving a 4-button handgame (a social affair with food).

Certain vows—those of a more solemn kind, such as one to hold a Sacred Dance or, in some cases at least, to undergo solitary self-torture—were announced publicly. The exact rule—if there was one—in this matter we could not determine. Apparently such announcement was regularly made when the act vowed called for the help of a ritual grandfather.

In general breach of vow brought misfortune. "The Gros Ventres," said Singer, "believe in keeping the vows they make to get a sick person well. They think that [otherwise] they have bad luck." This "bad luck" did not automatically follow breach of vow, but came as a punishment inflicted by the being to whom the vow had been made.

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Singer's own guilt feeling at her delay in fulfilling her vow to amputate her finger joint is clear from her dream (infra under "Dreams"). The more recent case of the death by lightning of the young man who put off buying the Feathered Pipe cloth wrapping he had promised, as mentioned earlier (supra, p. 132), was popularly interpreted as perhaps a punishment. Another case told us by The Boy illustrated the same belief in punishment for breach of vow. 782

"Not long ago [in The Boy's lifetime] a certain man's relative was sick, and he vowed to the Supreme Being to undergo solitary self-torture out on the hills all day so the relative would recover. The relative did recover. But time went on, and the vower did not carry out his vow that summer or that year. Next summer he had a dream and in the dream someone asked him: 'When are you going to carry out your vow?' Still the vower let the matter go. He had the same dream four times and each time was asked the same question. 782 821

"After the fourth time, he began to think. He was on the spot. He decided to invite some of the principal men,—the keepers of the sacred Pipes, some ex-keepers, and some others,—among them, my father, Lame Bull. He told the assembled group about his dream. They studied it, and finally Lame Bull took it on himself to interpret it. 'I am afraid,' he said, 'This is not good that you dreamed that four times and that you waited so long to carry out your vow. This means you will not be called [warned] any more. I advise you to put up a sweat-lodge for me [Lame Bull was apparently Flat Pipe keeper at the time] and I will see what I can do for you to appease someone you have made angry. Get busy right away and cut willows and get rocks and wood for a sweat-lodge rite tomorrow. I will pray for you at the sweat-lodge rite so that you may be released and absolved from any punishment that might [otherwise] come to you.'

"The vower was glad and agreed, and glad that the invitees would help. . . . But before the sweat-lodge was put up a violent thunderstorm arose. There were abundant berries around the camp and a lot of women and children out picking them were caught in the storm. I was a little boy at the time and was along

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782 821 on the berry picking. The storm spoiled the berry picking and as soon as it was over we started back to camp. The berry pickers who were in the lead on the way back stopped on a ridge in view of the camp and at once saw that something was wrong there. When they got to camp they found that the vower and his boy had been killed and his wife stunned by lightning. She was put in rain water and came to. The vower had just come back from getting the things for the sweat-lodge and was eating with his wife and boy when the storm passed over the camp.

"Another man had gone out on horseback . . . and cried all through the storm . . . after the storm had passed and the sun was shining . . . a cloud was seen to come back and stop right over the camp circle and he saw lightning and heard thunder at the same time, and he passed out, but only for a moment. When he came to, his ears were ringing and he was facing in the opposite direction. So he turned around again and looked and saw this cloud going back toward the rest of the storm [clouds]. . . .

"The people all ran to the vower and found him and his wife and boy lying there. . . . The boy's head [hair] was all curly and singed, and there was some little sage brush in his hair and they wondered how it got there. The people there always believed that the man and his boy were killed because the former did not carry out his vow. His wife is still living. This man was not given the chance to make up for his neglect. . . ."

"The man," The Boy added, "had made the vow, not to Bha'a, the storm being, but to someone else, the Supreme Being. In this case the Supreme Being employed or delegated Bha'a to mete out punishment to the man who failed to fulfill his vow."

Oaths

782 By oaths we here understand solemn appeals to the supernatural world in witness to the truth of a statement or to the binding character of a promise,—the first being assertory oaths, the second promissory ones. Whether promissory oaths were taken by the Gros Ventres is not clear. A possible instance was Good Singer's promise, after being captured and made to dance over her husband's body, of a Sacrifice Dance, the promise itself having been

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preceded by her words: "As the power above and the sun sees what these people [her captors] have made me do." Assertory oaths clearly were taken, but were not common. 782

The Boy, with Thick concurring, stated: "Oaths were taken only in serious situations and only on rare occasions, chiefly when some one was accused publicly of some grave crime and was compelled to prove himself innocent. He would not use the expression, 'the sun sees me,' but would just point upward and say, Ixtcibni:hohat (the Supreme Being) is listening to me and is witnessing what I say, and I say that what you are saying [about me] is not true."

On another occasion The Boy explained: "The Gros Ventres did not take oaths very often but only in extreme cases. They took explicit oaths, but usually only implicit ones through pipe, or knife, or wetting the skin between the collarbones. This last could be done just in fun. A listener would wet his finger with his tongue and say: 'All right, I'll wet my finger and touch your skin, and if what you say is true and you act before your skin dries, I will believe you.'"

Al Chandler gave the following details: "An Indian is supposed to tell whatever he says like black and white. Especially if he takes an oath that he will tell the truth, he is supposed never to break that. The liars will even take that oath and then lie anyway. A person takes an oath by running the blade of a sharp knife right along next to his lips, wetting the blade and saying: 'If I lie, God will punish me (or something will happen to me),' then stabs the knife in the earth. The oath is taken when somebody does not believe a person and says to him: 'Swear that you are not lying.' Sometimes if a man takes an oath like that but is really lying, something actually happens to him: maybe he might break a leg. The punishment comes right away. This is what makes them afraid, because it [the truth] will come right out."

The women's chastity test, regarding which our informants were not fully agreed, was essentially an oath. We did not succeed in clearing up the problem, in spite of long conferences in the field on it.[14] In any case, however, considerable light is thrown on the nature of Gros Ventre assertory oaths.

[14] Cf. Flannery, 1953, pp. 193-94.

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837 Following is The Boy's account gotten from his father, Lame Bull, and given to us in 1939, with slight additions, in parentheses, from his quite similar account given us in 1945:

"This custom disappeared when Lame Bull was a small boy [hence, about 1832-35]. He remembered it distinctly, although he had seen it only once, in his early boyhood. The crier went around saying to everybody: 'Get ready everybody, after sunrise tomorrow morning, to see who is the woman most faithful to her husband.' The custom was carried out only once in a great while. A group of older men, not real old ones but those still active, would get together and agree that the test should be carried out.

"The very first thing the next morning, the crier went around and announced: 'This is meant for *every* married couple, old and young. Put on your best clothes. Start right away.' Then two of the biggest lodges in the camp circle were put together to make a two-lodge tent. After it was put up, the crier announced: 'Everyone come from every direction to the center-lodge.' All came, dressed up, especially the unmarried young men. (The young men before the test witnessed by Lame Bull had made it up among themselves, to get up and say publicly, 'That woman is lying,' should any woman get up and dance whom they knew to be lying about her fidelity.) (They had a brush shed at the front of the double-lodge, and the flaps of the lodge were raised so that more people could fit in and look on. The women had to sit inside. The only men inside were the singers and musicians, some standing and beating drums, others seated with their hands under the elkskin in front of them.) The singers sat in a circle with a big tanned elkskin in the middle, and each singer had two human shin-bones, one in each hand, and both shin-bones were notched saw-like with a series of notches. There were several pairs of these bones. When the singing began and the drum holders beat their drums, the bone holders sawed with the bones under the elkskin. A weird noise was made by the sawing together of these bones invisible to the onlookers.

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"Before the singing began, one man got up and told the women what the affair was about and the procedure in it, so that they would understand: 'The men are going to sing four times. If not a single woman gets up and dances and uncovers the human bones

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under the elkskin, then there is not a woman in the entire Gros Ventre tribe who is faithful to her husband. And it would even look bad if one does exist but does not get up until the fourth singing.' Then he impressed on the women's minds that getting up and uncovering the human bones under the elkskin was like taking an oath. The older women might know that the things to be uncovered were human bones, but the younger ones might not.

"After this man was through talking, some of the older women got up and encouraged the younger women: 'Surely there ought to be one in this whole group who has been faithful to her husband. Don't fear. Be proud of the fact. Get up and dance.' When the singers started to sing [the song, number 69, was sung by The Boy and recorded by us], they started off with a bang, shouting and yelling and beating the drums fast. They sang the song once and then the second time, and then began making remarks: 'We have sung twice. There are no dancers yet. Only two more times are left.'

"They sang it the third time and still there were no dancers. A lot of the old women were now walking around and pleading with the young wives: 'Don't let this pass without at least one wife getting up.' Before the last song started, several of the leading men, too, said: 'This is the last time. If no married young woman dances and uncovers the scraping here, then not one Gros Ventre woman in the entire tribe is faithful to her husband.'

"Finally from about the center of the crowd of sitting women, a young woman got up and stepped out, amid much applause, for she was perhaps the comeliest young woman in the tribe. She sort of tucked up her skirts on both sides under her belt and started to dance toward the drumbeating and scraping. She danced fast, vigorously, like a man. She made four rounds, and on each of the first three made a pass with her hand toward the covered scraping. The fourth time she lifted the elkskin. The singing and the scraping with the bones stopped at once.

The young woman had to pause to catch her breath, saying: 'When I catch my breath I will tell you something.' When she had caught her breath, pointing around to all the men with a sweeping gesture she said: 'Plenty of nice young men are here but not one of them knows me [in the sense of sex relations]. The only man

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

who knows me and whom I know is my husband. But many of you have tried to [seduce me] but did not succeed. Ninä:nä'ak is listening to me and he knows I am telling the truth. Sunshine gives the most light, and what I have to say has nothing hidden in it. It is as true as the light of day which sunshine gives. My husband is off on a war party and he will distinguish himself during it, and this will be another mark that I am telling the truth.'

"Then the old men and old women drowned out one another singing her praises. All thought her a wonderful woman, being alone at night and so beautiful and yet withstanding all advances. Her name was Speaks Holy, and her husband's, Sun Old Man.

"After the bones had been uncovered a dance was held, including a contest between a man and a woman. A woman and a man got up and danced toward each other, each making faces at the other, pulling noses, and so forth. The one who laughed first lost and was pushed back into his or her seat. The winner remained on the floor and challenged. Another, of the opposite sex, then got up from the side of the loser and contested with the previous winner. And so the contest went on until one, a man or woman, won in four successive bouts. When this happened he or she was the winner. All the people then threw them [each successive loser?] down and covered them up with their robes. Then there was food and feasting and the affair ended.

"There was no prayer or smudging or other rite, except the oath the woman took on the spot to the Supreme Being, Ninänä'ätc. The young woman in the case had taken upon herself a serious thing. She took an oath. . . . She was glad of the opportunity to declare her fidelity. . . .

"At the end the double lodge was torn down. Early in the morning, after the third night, the war party returned. . . . Sun Old Man had counted coup, he had struck an enemy and had returned with something. So his wife must have told the truth, for nothing had been prearranged. All this added to the fury of other husbands against their wives. The women denied and said: 'We did not want to do this publicly. What that woman did in uncovering the bones was just a bid for notoriety. We can be faithful without doing that. We are humble.'

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

782 837

"Lame Bull said that the old men had told him that the Gros Ventres used to hold this test once in a while, but the only one he witnessed was the one described. He also said that they were going to hold this test again when he was a middle-aged man and were all ready to do so, when a war party came back, some of whose members had been killed in battle. So that spoiled the occasion. And after that, the test was never held."

Dreams, Visions and Auditions

787

Gros Ventre for "a dream" is kana:tĕ; for "a vision," and apparition seen while you are awake or "even while you are sleeping and somebody comes to you," be:tänohatsä:na', "something sacred I saw." In the following pages we are for clarity's sake distinguishing between dreams occurring in sleep and visions and auditions occurring in waking hours. What, if any, importance the Gros Ventres themselves attached to the distinction is not clear, although they of course were fully aware of it, as is obvious from their explicit statements in the cases recorded by us. It is quite clear, however, that such dreams, visions, and auditions played a major role in their magico-religious culture, and entered into it in numerous ways and on numerous occasions. Illustrative cases will be given presently.

Especially in the spring time older men, after going to bed at night, would command silence in the lodge and would sing and pray, informally without ritual observances, and would pray among other things for some good dream and for deep sleep[1] so that they would not wake up before the dream was over.

Dreams in which power was offered or imparted were supposed to be kept more or less secret. Such secrecy was not, however, called for, it seems, regarding other dreams.

Dreams as recorded by us fall into two categories, those in which gifts or messages were imparted to the dreamer by some being, and those in which interpretation of the meaning of the dreams

[1] The Arapaho, we were told, call this kind of sleep "thick sleep." In 1948 Tom Main said that the literal translation of the Gros Ventre word for "deep sleep" is actually "thick sleep." [R.F.]

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

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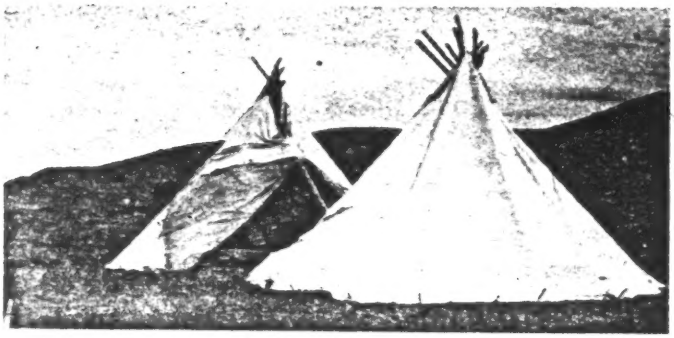

A. *Double tipi for ceremony.*

[301
182]

B. *The Boy prays with ordinary pipe.*

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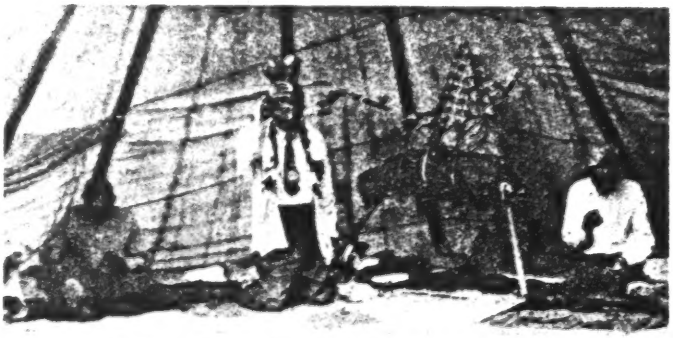
534
778



C. *The Boy smudges rattles over Flat Pipe hearth.*

PLATE I

[p.425]

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

The wheel game, too, in contrast to the 2-button hand game, was accompanied with no legerdemain and no grace or fancy movements. The players might run or trot in a rather awkward or ridiculous fashion, "awfully funny, like a chicken walking backwards," as one informant put it; but they did not care what the crowd might think of their queer or clumsy gait; they were out to win; they would await some other occasion "to show off handsome."

Likewise, in the wheel game, no prayers to any being were said and there was no resort to supernatural power gotten from prairie chickens or ghosts (see *infra* under hand game). Even if a given wheel-game player had such power, it was of no avail in the wheel game and was not called upon. In the gambling-for-scalps story, to be mentioned presently, the Gros Ventre prayed to the Supreme Being to win, but here there was question not so much of winning material goods as of preserving physical wholeness and life itself, things within the peculiar keeping of the Supreme Being in Gros Ventre theology.

Success in the wheel game depended on two things: skill and what may be called thought-wish power. In the play all effort was concentrated by the players on the utmost exercise of skill and adroitness acquired through long practice and of judgment, in following the rolling wheel and in throwing the pole at just the precise moment and in just the right manner. But, in at least some of the big wheel games, a sort of thought power or thought-wish power was used by the players. In how far such power can be considered "supernatural" is hard to say; it seems to have been more "natural" than "supernatural," as judged by most definitions of "supernatural." At any rate, it was not a power gained, as most other Gros Ventre supernatural powers were gained, from some being by crying, fasting, and dreaming on mountain tops or along timbered water courses.

Its efficacy was derived ultimately from the player's previous war exploits. Its exercise was along the following pattern. There being no set time for wheel games, one might get under way any time, with relatively small stakes, and develop in the course of play into a really big game, or the game could be a big one from the start. In such a big game, between outstanding opponents, for large stakes and for status (see *infra*), before starting to roll the wheel, each player would in turn take the wheel in one hand and with the other touch his pole (arrow or stick) under the wheel on a particular bead. While doing so he would think with intense concentration of one of his past war deeds—e.g., a horse he took from the very door of his enemy's lodge at great risk of life—and would say in his mind, silently and not audibly: "I am not telling a lie [about this deed]. The powers know I am not telling a lie." He would rehearse the event in his mind, and probably (the point was not fully cleared up by us) would think of

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

791 787 776 from behind the blanketed enclosure, the fire would be re-lighted, the performer would say the prayer customary among the Gros [782] Ventres before all meals to the Supreme Being and other beings, then he or she and the others present would eat the food that had remained from the ghost's repast. Finally they would all sit around smoking and chatting a while before dispersing. I failed to gather any information on whether the performer receives any payment or not for his or her services in the rite.

Certain simplifications of the above procedure under emergency conditions as on war expeditions are noted or intimated in a couple of the following four narratives, the first two given by The Boy, the last two by Thick.

Narrative 1

787 The following story was told by The Boy.

776 "A certain man had his deceased father as his ghost helper.
539 The ghost helper used to speak Gros Ventre just like living people but in a bass voice. Everybody understood him when they heard him.

"On one occasion the Gros Ventre tribe were camped near the forks of the Teton and Marias Rivers. While there a large group of the men decided to go on the warpath. So they left the main camp, went up the Missouri River and camped that first night at the mouth of Crow Creek where it empties into the Missouri River. When it was dark that night some of the men said: 'Let's offer the pipe to X [the one mentioned above who had the ghost helper; name not given] and ask him to find out whether our prospects on this war party are good or bad.' So they filled up a pipe and went to X, held out the pipe to him and asked him: 'Accept the pipe and call your spirit.'

[791] "X accepted willingly and soon after they had smoked the pipe together they made a shelter where X was to do the spirit-rite. So they tied up X, filled the pipe again, put it there and sang a song four times. When they were singing it the fourth time they heard a voice in the air. The ghost helper arrived and the shelter shook as a lodge would have done in the same rite. When the spirit hit the ground, the ground shook too. The spirit

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

Ventres' horses except those belonging to one man. This man loaned out his horses as far as they would go around to four of the Gros Ventres who went in pursuit of the Cree.

"Then that evening two of the other men, one of them my father, approached Bear Old Woman. They filled up a pipe just as you do when you go to someone to doctor you, offered it to the old woman, and asked her to find out from her ghost helper who stole the horses and where they were. Bear Old Woman, who had quite a temper, got angry right away as usual and pushed the pipe away as a sign of refusal. Finally one of the young fellows there, a relative of hers, said: 'Well, let me smoke it,' to force her to accept. She angrily grabbed the pipe and had to go through with the rite. When she took the pipe she rubbed her hands on the ground and rubbed dust on the pipe and offered a prayer before smoking. The pipe was then smoked by her and by the two men who had approached her.

"Then they began to get things ready. They killed a puppy, singed its hair off at a fire, took its insides out without skinning, quartered it up and boiled it. They put the boiled meat on a plate and got ready some other kinds of food to give to the old woman. Then the two men filled up a pipe and they together with two other men and with a 'servant' went to Bear Old Woman's lodge. On arriving there they set down the plate of dog meat near the head of her bed, the pipe between the incense hearth and the lodge fire, and the other dishes between the lodge fire and the door.

"When everything was arranged and Bear Old Woman was still sitting on her bed, she said: 'Whoever is the greatest unbeliever among you, come and tie me up.' One of the four volunteered. Then the old woman got up and went to a place just south of the head of the bed, to a little enclosure made by hanging up a blanket. He hobbled her four fingers (thumb too?) with sinew, interlacing it in and out of the four fingers of each hand. Then he tied her hands together behind her back and also hobbled her feet. She was lying on a robe. He gathered the robe around her and tied her with rawhide thongs until only her head stuck out of the robe. And so he left her lying on her

7: Flannery E-5 (1940, 1945) 1947
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

of the society. The officers were free to transfer their ceremonial equipment to other members whom they would select. Following the typical Gros Ventre pattern of transfer of ownership, the recipient would present as lavish gifts as he could afford to the donor while the relatives of the recipient showed their appreciation of the favor to their kinsman by giving away expensive gifts in his honor. All of this took place publicly at the dance.

Particular dances and songs were attached to each office and the owners of the ceremonial drumsticks were required to know in correct order all the numerous songs and to provide the musical accompaniment for the whole ceremony. These four drumstick owners were joined in certain of the songs by four women singers selected from among the wives of the Wolf-men. The owners of the various objects were responsible for the proper care thereof, the crow-belts and the drum receiving most respect. When not in use, the crow-belts were kept wrapped in special bundles in the lodges of their respective owners, but were hung outside when the owner's wife was in her menstrual period. Moreover, those who danced wearing the crow-belts were obliged to refrain from sexual relations for two or three days previous to the dancing and, before donning the belts, to make a smudge of sweet-grass to incense themselves and the crow-belts. The drum, too, received special attention. One informant speaks of it as having been "nicely decorated," and we know from Kroeber's description[9] that the trimming was very similar to that of the Assiniboine Grass dance drum.[10]

Procedure. The actual dancing took place in a special circular dancing-place in the center of the camp circle. This "corral," as it was sometimes referred to, was constructed from several lodge covers, but was open at the top and the entrance thereto was at the east. The tipi of the drum-keeper was put up nearby. Opposite the opening of the "corral" was the place of honor where sat the officials,—with the exception of the sword owners, who with their assistants were at either side of the entrance. The

[9] Kroeber, loc. cit., p. 238.

[10] Lowie, R. H., The Assiniboine, AMNH-AP 4, pt. 1, 1909, p. 67.

8:Flannery E-5 (1940-1948)1960 NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

"My experience was by dreaming. One time before I was married—I must have been about eight years old—I was sleeping in a big lodge and a 'person' came and wakened me. He had a bag of medicines on his back. He came to me on four successive nights and laid out these medicines and told me what each was for. On the third of these nights there was a man lying there—he was just skin and bones. The 'person' who had awakened me told me: 'You could take all these medicines and you could cure people like that one lying there' [i.e., a person in the last extremity]. In my dream I would do everything he told me, manipulate my hands to draw out the sickness, and do everything. But I didn't want that power and would tell him so. Each morning too I would relate to my grandmother exactly what had happened in the night but she would try to hush me up, telling me: 'Don't say anything; don't tell anyone. You will be a great medicine woman.' But I didn't want that power. I didn't like it because when medicine people suck on the weak part of the sick person they have to swallow what they extract. I had decided I would rather be quiet and not do anything like that, or sacrifice my flesh, or things of that kind. Perhaps if it had come later I might have taken that power and become great."

Nevertheless when later in life she had other dreams indicating supernatural power, she likewise refused. She explained in regard to one of these experiences, for instance: "The one who awakened me this time had told me to face the rising sun and was showing me how to make a smudge from the moss that grows close on logs; but I told him. 'No. I would rather not have it.' Those who have power die too soon."

Incidentally, still in connection with curing, bleeding was an operation which was performed purely as a natural remedy for a person who felt dizzy or sluggish. Anyone could do it—no supernatural validation was needed. Other women described quite casually how it was done and discussed the various times they had actually performed the operation. Coming Daylight, however, insisted that while there was really nothing to such an operation, she could never bring herself to perform it, nor would she allow anyone else to bleed her; she could not stand the sight of blood.

The aversion to the sight of blood and to self-mutilation was evidently deep-seated and showed itself in a marked manner early in her life. On one occasion a close relative was very ill. In such a situation it was expected that every member of the family would rally around and do whatever he could toward the recovery. Among the things that fell within the scope of activity for female relatives was that of vowing to sacrifice something valuable, including perhaps the blood from one's arm or a finger-joint, if the person recovered. At this particular time, Coming Daylight was a young child, and her grandmother decided that it would be appropriate for the little girl to offer that her finger-tip be removed if the relative regained his health. When it was suggested to her, Coming Daylight refused, even though her grandmother took after her with a stick. She actually ran away and wandered alone, until two nights later the relative died and an uncle finally found her.

On another occasion in her early youth, too, she defied a convention connected with kinship by refusing to join in mourning for an uncle who had been killed in revenge for having instigated the murder of his brother's wife. When her grandmother upbraided Coming Daylight for not expressing grief in the traditional manner, the latter defied her by saying: "I am not going to cry for that man. I don't know why you are crying for him. I have worked for that woman and she has fed me, and has even given me meat to bring home to you. I heard

l: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

Doctors were paid a horse or more for their services. Sometimes several, in turn, doctored a patient, each one blaming those that had failed before. Often they laid the sickness to spirits, or to other doctors. This last occurred especially if in their sucking they extracted human finger-nails or similar objects. In such a case the doctor got his patient to sleep. The patient might then in his dream see the person that had made him sick, and on awaking would denounce him. If the sick man died, his relatives might kill the doctor whom he had named as the cause of his sickness.

There were not so many women doctors as men. They appear not to have gone out to the mountains with the intention of acquiring supernatural power, but to have received guardian spirits when they were away from the camp, mourning.

The jugular and femoral arteries and the aorta were called ts'niinotanoudj[1] ("having no ears"), because, when severed, they did not heed any remedies.

In order to save the life of a sick relative, the joint of the little finger was sometimes cut off in sacrifice to the sun.

There were some medicine-men who, having had their fingers tied, then had their knees fastened together and their hands secured behind their back. After this they were wrapped in a robe and the robe was wound about with a rope. Then such a medicine-man called his spirit. When it appeared, he was loosened instantaneously, and the robe and the rope were thrown at the man that tied him.

Fig. 30 (50 1937). Doctor's Charm. Length, 22 cm.

A charm used by a doctor is shown in Fig. 30. It consists of a deer-tail with beaded base, and of two black feathers and a bunch of down feathers. All parts of the object are reddened. This piece was used to brush patients. At other times during the doctoring it was worn on the medicine-man's clothing.

A man unsuccessful in winning a woman's love sometimes fasted on a

l: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

276 778 The sacred flat-pipe was also used in the sun-dance. It was once captured in war. Then the man who took it had bad dreams, until the pipe [728] spoke to him in his dream and said, "Return me, or your tribe will be destroyed." Then this man brought back the pipe, and his tribe made peace with the Gros Ventre.

343 782 The making of a sweat-house was not restricted to certain persons. A man wishing success in war would make a sweat-house for another person, in order that he might accomplish the deed he had in mind. Or, if a person was sick, one of his relatives might pledge to make a sweat-house for him, just as he would a dance. In this case the sick person himself would not necessarily use the sweat-house. On the other hand, a doctor might prescribe sweating for a patient, and in this case the sick person would enter the sweat-house.

[757]

343 515 [237]

Fig. 43 (50–4388). Sweat-house Tail. Length, 36 cm.

About twelve or fourteen willow poles were cut for the sweat-house. The entrance always faced the sunrise, and a small cottonwood-tree was erected in front of it. To this, calico or other property was tied by an old man as a gift to the sun. The cloth was partly blackened, the corners being rubbed with charcoal.

When all the participants were inside, the blankets were pulled down and the house closed tight. Water was poured on hot stones, at first five times. Thereupon the lodge was opened at the entrance and at the opposite west end, and the people cooled. It was then closed again, and this time water was poured on the rocks seven times. After cooling once more, water was poured on the rocks nine times. The fourth time, the man that poured the water could put as much or as little on the stones as he wished. After the fourth time, the participants came out and bathed. [757] If they were suffering from pain, they whipped that part of the body with buffalo or horse tails. This practice made the heat greatest at that point, much as if it were beaten into the body.

than six poles would be so tied together, a strong line running through the holes, leaving a loop to go about the horses' neck. Another line was tied around the six, about in the middle, to hold the poles together as the horse dragged them through the water. A mounted horse could draw two sets of six poles across the river at one time, one set on each side, but could not take all the poles for a lodge on a single trip. Meat packed in skin bags was often lashed to the poles and did not suffer in transit. Occasionally older children rode across the river on these poles, and some people paddled across straddling a single log.

The same goods which we have described as used by the Gros Ventre to meet their needs for food, clothing, shelter and transportation were likewise used to meet many other needs. Cloth and clothing, feathers, ornaments, and so forth, were used as religious sacrifices and offerings. Food was used as payment or part-payment for services of those who helped in production of economic goods, or of those who cured diseases, acted in ceremonial capacity of one kind or another, as well as in meeting certain specific kinship obligations. Lodges might be painted in accordance with a supernatural vision, and, with the associated songs, were transferrable to others as ritual objects. Horses were used as payments of various kinds,—in connection with the bride price, to ceremonial grandfathers, and so on. There was thus no medium of exchange within the group and no strict classification into producer's goods as contrasted with consumer's goods is possible.

CHAPTER V

WAR AND PRESTIGE

Organization and Conduct of the Party

721 554 Recognition was granted for any accomplishment that involved risk of life at the hands of the enemy. The constantly recurring attacks upon the Gros Ventres by one neighboring tribe or another offered many opportunities for the display of bravery, but those who joined in taking the initiative against the enemy had the greatest chances of accumulating impressive war records. Consequently parties set out at frequent intervals with the avowed purpose either of stealing horses or of avenging loss of Gros Ventre life.

721 Although it was not uncommon for two or three men to go off quietly together when raiding for horses, if a larger number was involved, some formalities were observed. The man who decided to lead a war party had his intention publicly announced around the camp circle by a crier and any who wished might volunteer to join him. A young man, untried in war, would hardly set himself up as leader in this way, but would be anxious to follow someone whose reputation for bravery was already well established.[1]

533 721 [782] Ordinarily, when the group was composed of ten or more men, there were some preliminaries the night before the party set off. The members gathered and sang in front of lodges of those they hoped would be able to help them. Each man so selected at least prayed for the success of the party as he gave them a smoke and fed them. In addition, if he had ammunition or clothing or something of the kind that would be useful on the expedition, he donated these to the party. It was said that an occasional man would "be so pleased with what the party was about to do" that he sent his wife out to sing with them. Thus the party sang around the camp circle in front of various lodges and, after agreeing on

[1] Sometimes young men were restless and sang around the camp circle to indicate their willingness to go on a raid if someone would lead them. Such a song was recorded as No. 70.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

605 593 Reservation. She heard the car drive up and, without thinking how it might be interpreted by the other two women, exclaimed: 'Oh, there is my man! I must go!' Since in that neighborhood 'my man' is commonly used to indicate husband or lover, Mary laughed. Almost immediately, however, she caught herself and straightened her face, remarking: 'I shouldn't have even thought that or laughed like I did. That man is my cousin and I should be ashamed of him.' Furthermore when Mary went out with her to get in the car, Charles insisted that Mary sit in the back seat so that everybody could see that they rode in the same car only to accommodate the white woman. Mary remarked later on: 'It is funny, but I just can't bring myself to sit down and have a conversation with my men-relatives, like white brothers and sisters do. I still have a feeling it is an awful thing to talk to my brothers, male cousins, father-in-law and Indian sons-in-law,—although I don't mind in the least talking to my white son-in-law.'"

Brother and sister were expected to grant each other's requests whenever it was in their power to do so and without complaint, regardless of the inconvenience which might be involved. The following incident illustrates how sensitive the Gros Ventres were on this point. "When the present Mrs. Takes-the-Bow was a small girl, she often was sick. One time her father's sister came into the lodge and muttered to herself: 'Oh you are just using up all my medicine in doctoring you—what is wrong with you!' Unfortunately the child's father overheard this impatient comment and was deeply hurt, because very seldom would a woman say anything like that in front of her brother. So he decided: 'My sister considers me a lot of trouble, and if that is the way she feels about it I shall never request her services again.' He meant exactly what he said. He left immediately to go on a war party. Careless of his life, he recklessly rode into the midst of the enemy and was killed."

593 782 721 One way of showing how much a woman thought of her brother was for her to make offerings in his behalf. When young men were going off on a war party, the sister of one of them might go outside the lodge and make a promise along the following lines: "I will give my finger as offering if my brother will come back a great warrior." It was considered a great honor, of course, to

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

many girls liked to pretend that they had one of these Pipes at their play-lodge. They used a certain kind of flower to represent the Pipe and would put it outside the play-lodge in the same position as the real Pipe was placed. They smudged and sang Pipe songs just as their elders did. Once in a while they would pretend they were going to transfer the Pipe. Mud was smeared on their foreheads just as the Keeper used paint. The others would seize the new "Keeper," paint him, go through an imitation of the ceremonies, sing songs, and so on. At the end of the game, however, the rest of the children finally took the "Keeper" and dumped him in the water head foremost,—an indignity that would have been out of the question in regard to a real Keeper.

Thus it was evident how much children learned by observation. It was specifically stated in regard to the learning of songs that no one ever sat down with a child to teach him a special song or dance, that he would pick up songs and dances by hearing and seeing them performed at the various ceremonies. Similarly, according to both Coming Daylight and to Singer, there was no special teaching in regard to a knowledge of the Supreme Being. Children would know about Him because they would from infancy have heard older people mention Him. In the old days people never did anything without first saying a prayer. The prayers always started out by mentioning the name of the "One above the White Man," and then names of other beings followed.[4]

Training

Formal training, in skills necessary for women's work, was begun for little girls at an early age. This was usually in the hands of a female relative,—a grandmother or perhaps a widowed aunt, —to whom the child would be sent at about the age of seven years. The reason for removing a girl from her immediate family circle was said to have been to protect her virginity. Her parents wanted to send her "where no men were living, as they didn't want a girl around home with her father, brother, male cousins." Should there not be a suitable relative, however, the girls' parents would keep her at home and she would receive training in domestic duties from her own mother. In any case, the girl was sup-

[4] Religion is treated in full in Cooper Ms. 1949.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

CHAPTER X

OLD AGE AND DEATH

It is the opinion of the now aged Gros Ventres that the proportion of old persons was much greater in the past than it has been since they have taken up the white man's ways; and further, that the aged then retained their health and vigor to a greater degree.[1] One old woman stated that when she was young, there used to be many old people, but that they died off when there were no more buffalo. She added: "People lived to a good old age on the things that the Supreme Being provided,—roots, wild vegetables and fruits, dried meats and berries. In those days, too, they drank broth instead of tea and coffee. Old folks didn't lose their teeth then, although even young girls do nowadays. Their teeth eventually got worn down, but they seldom pulled them. In fact, if an old person should lose a tooth, he thought it was awful and was sure that he was ready for the grave. Furthermore, people didn't get white hair until they were ready for 'old age sleep'—very old people sleep most of the time—yet now one sees middle-aged and even younger people with gray hair like the whites have."

Status and Treatment of the Aged

It was believed that a person who had lived to a ripe old age had been privileged to do so by the Supreme Being. Therefore, they reasoned, if you are good to old people, these in turn will pray to the Supreme Being for your health, long life, and success. Children were instructed explicitly to be good to the aged,—to feed them, to clothe them, and to help them in difficulties,—as well as to seek out those so blessed and ask for their prayers. It was

[1] Allowance should of course be made for the fact that "old age" is a relative term. When it was said that young men were urged to marry "older experienced women," this referred to a woman of perhaps twenty to twenty-five. See pp. 171–72. A woman on the northern plains was "old" at forty, according to Denig, p. 513.

thought well, too, to name a child after someone who had attained advanced age. Thus it was that youths of 16 or 17 years of age would go out in a storm and stand before the lodge of some old man or woman and cry, begging the prayers of that person. Again, on a hunting party, should there be some old man along, unable to hunt, one member of the group might give a whole buffalo carcass to him; whereupon the grateful elder would offer a spontaneous prayer on the donor's behalf. Similarly, it was not at all unusual for successful young hunters to seek out old people to share in some of the spoils,—just as in these later times a bottle of whiskey was occasionally given to old persons by the young. Once in a while, too, some married man would have his wife cook a quantity of food and publicly invite old people, one of whom, in appreciation of this attention, would offer the expected prayer for the long life, health and success of the host and all the members of his household.

Dignity was, however, not necessarily an attribute of old age. With advancing years the conventions were somewhat relaxed. It was stated by one informant: "When a man had lived long enough to have participated in all the Sacred Dances, he had acquired the right to do almost as he pleased, including not having to observe so strictly the relationship taboos. It seemed to throw the bars down and he could have even more fun than ever at the expense of his enemy-friends and become still more vulgar and obscene." Relations between old women living together were not always harmonious and noisy quarreling was not unusual. Sometimes young boys played pranks on such old women, as in the following case.

"Two old women who were sisters shared a lodge. One day they were in there, seated back to back, warming themselves by the fire. They didn't have any clothes on and were feeling good, scratching their skins with sticks. Two young boys peeped in. They took a long willow and quietly heated the end of it in the fire. When the end of the willow was glowing, they touched one of the old women with it. She yelled at the other: 'You burned me,' and of course the other denied it. After a little while, the boys did the same thing to the other old woman. They heard her call out: 'What did you do to me? You burned me!' The boys

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second element in the word is the name of the culture hero and trickster, who in the early mythical period taught the Gros Ventres how to pray to the Supreme Being, and how to make a living. The present-day Gros Ventres can give no clue to the etymological meaning of the word ni:həhat, nor can the writer analyze it. The word is also used for spider. The spider is in a certain sense sacred and, if it is killed, rain comes. The spider, the Gros Ventres say, can in spite of its small size do wonderful things with its web, can make it stay anywhere, can climb up and down it, and, in general, is usually master of the situation. The name of the trickster Ni:həhat is ordinarily translated as "white man" by English-speaking Gros Ventres and the translation is derived from a folktale concerning an escapade of Ni:həhat in which he had his hair cut off.[8] Thus it was that when the Gros Ventres first saw the white man with his hair cut short, in contrast to the Gros Ventres' long hair, they called him by the name of the trickster. Consequently, the name for the Supreme Being Ixtciboni:həhat is often rendered in English as "The One Above the White Man" or, in abbreviated form, "The One Above."

The second name for the Supreme Being is Behä:tixtč. The meaning, "the master, boss, head, leader of all" is quite clear (be:-, be:hi, "all"; änä:tixtč, "he is master, boss, head, of group or organization).[9]

The third name Ni:nänä'ätč, is said to be an older form which was still in use in the lifetime of The Boy and Thick, and it was felt that it had the meaning of "study, think, meditate," and that the whole might signify "the being who has control over everything by thought or will,"—a concept which, it may be added, would be quite in keeping with the Gros Ventre idea of the power of sheer thought or thought-wish by human beings. But this

[8] Kroeber, 1907, pp. 72-73, gives a version of this episode which is substantially the same as the one obtained by me.

[9] In 1948 The Boy stated that the Gros Ventres addressed the Supreme Being by this term "when they wanted something big, e.g. when they prayed for a good harvest of all the things the earth produced. Thus we are saying a kind of mass prayer indicating that the Supreme Being owns everything. He made it and he owns it, and it was recognized that they depended on him." [R.F.]

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was supposed to have come on earth far up north, and to have made the rounds of all the tribes, finally reaching the Gros Ventres. The Gros Ventres at first so called the priest, but when they discovered that he ate and slept like themselves, they ceased calling him by this name.

In the sweatlodge rite, to be described later, the first of those invited to sweat was the Supreme Being.[1] In how far such an invitation was anthropomorphically conceived is hard to say; it need not, of course, necessarily have implied anything beyond symbolic deference.

The Boy and Thick stated: "He is not a 'false person.' He is entirely in a class by himself. We think so much of him that we do not dare to try to learn what he looks like. We class him as a kind of shadow. He is the most wonderful and powerful of all beings who have no bodies."

No statues or images or pictographs of any kind were ever made of the Supreme Being, nor were there any symbolic representations of him.

The Supreme Being was alone and one, and, as compared with other sacred or superhuman beings of religion, myth, and folklore, he ranked first. Where prayers included invocation of more beings than one, the Supreme Being's name always came first; in ritual invitations before sweating or partaking of food, he was always invited first. He was, however, much more than *primus inter pares*. He was in a class by himself as not only the most powerful but as the ultimate source of the power possessed by other beings and as the ultimate ruler and controller of these others. Bha'a, the Storm Being, who ranked next in importance to the Supreme Being, was controller of storms, thunder and lightning, and exercised a certain limited autonomy. He had this power and office, however, not of himself, but by delegation from the Supreme Being, and exercised it as the agent of the Supreme Being, as will be explained more fully later. Then, too, while the Gros Ventres through fasting and crying on the hills or prairie sought supernatural power, not directly from the Supreme Being, but from other beings—animals and others—it was the Supreme Being who

[1] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 275.

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had given to these beings the power which they in turn gave to humans. 776

The Supreme Being resides up above but he is in no sense identified with the sky or firmament or with any heavenly body. He is quite distinct therefrom, and in particular, quite distinct from the sun. "The sun is his work, his property like," according to Singer. Al Chandler stated, "If he did not want the sun to shine or to perform whatever duties it has, it couldn't do these things." While he resided up above, he could be prayed to from [782] anywhere. In this sense he was not localized, whereas many other beings such as power-bestowing ones, were sought out in their particular dwelling places and there prayed to.

Children were taught that the Supreme Being looked down on them from above and saw and heard all that they did, both good deeds such as charity to the needy, and evil ones such as stealing, even when the children thought they were quite alone and unobserved.[8]

The Supreme Being was emphatically the owner and master of all things, of the universe, the supernatural beings, as above stated, human beings (not merely the Gros Ventres), the animals, the earth, the heavenly bodies. All informants fully agreed on this. As The Boy reasoned it out: "He was master of everything on the earth and above, even of the spirit world, and not merely of the Gros Ventres, but of everybody."

Whether he was conceived of as the maker or creator of all things is not altogether clear. Three or four of our best informants stated categorically that "He made all things." He was "the creator of all things," "the ruler of all and creator of everything." "He made the earth," "He created us." There is some confusion, however, partly at least on account of the role of Earthmaker (see below, p. 23).

The Supreme Being was actively interested in the welfare of human beings, first of all as the giver, protector and master of life, and as the donor of food, but also as the source of supernatural power and of wealth.

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[8] For a discussion of difference in point of view between men and women informants, see Flannery, 1953, pp. 169-70.

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776 He was the "master of life" as previously mentioned. Long life was the result of something more than conformity to "health rules," such as daily morning cold baths to harden the body.[9] "The Supreme Being allows people to live long. If he wanted, he cut off their lives." "When people die, it is the Supreme Being who cuts off their lives." "Very old people lived a long life because they were pitied by the Supreme Being." The Boy's father, Lame Bull, said that "a man lives, not his own life, but according to what is given him and wished by Ixtcibani:həhat. A man has what he has by the wish of the One Above."

776 888 The Gros Ventres understood by that that the aged had survived to old age not by accident, but by the permission and wish of the Supreme Being. It was common for young men to approach in tears a very old man or woman, offer a pipe, and request him or her to ask the Supreme Being to grant him long life, to make him a good warrior who would be immune to arrows or bullets when he was shot at.[10]

776 721 782 [755] In grave illness the Supreme Being would be appealed to to spare the sick person's life. It was a common belief that the Supreme Being would not permit a large attacking force of enemies to slaughter a smaller number at home in its own camp. When a group of young Gros Ventre recruits was leaving for World War II, the Supreme Being was prayed to in an old song that he would watch over them and let them come back home unharmed; although there were some casualties among Gros Ventre soldiers in World War II, not one of the above particular group was even wounded.

776 [171] The Supreme Being as the one who "owns everything" was the provider of food. He was not called "master of food," as was common among the northeastern Algonquians,[11] living closer than the Gros Ventres to a scarcity economy; food, it was felt, was "too little" a thing, and the title undignified. But all good things to eat, including "wild" food such as berries, fruits, roots and tubers, came from the Supreme Being and were given by him.

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[9] Cf. Flannery, 1953, p. 144.
[10] Cf. Flannery, 1953, pp. 195-96.
[11] Cooper, 1934, p. 71.

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Supernatural power too, while gotten immediately from animals, mountains (mountain spirits), and other creatures, through fasting and sleeping out on the hills, came ultimately from the Supreme Being, as mentioned previously. A person going out on a power quest, would pray first to the Supreme Being to command or compel the lesser being to give the power being sought. Power to doctor and to achieve war success and even to acquire wealth thus in the last analysis came from the Supreme Being. So too did the (supernatural?) power inherent in earnest wishes or thought wishes.

The Supreme Being also imparted knowledge and warnings to human beings through dreams and through his messenger, the crow. The crow on account of his relationship to the Supreme Being was a sort of sacred bird.[12] To illustrate the point the Boy told the following incident in the life of his father, Lame Bull. "Lame Bull on one occasion was sitting out on a hill and no one could get him to come back to camp. So some of his family got one of Lame Bull's wives, The Boy's mother, to go out and tell Lame Bull to come home right away as the camp was moving. As Lame Bull saw her coming, a crow flew over to him and said, 'This person who is coming is going to tell you something that is not true. Don't pay any attention to her.' Then the crow flew away. When The Boy's mother came within hearing distance of Lame Bull, the latter said to her: 'Don't say what you are going to say. Turn back.' But she kept on coming and told him her message, for which she got a scolding from him."

In general the Supreme Being was, as regards his interest in human welfare, the reverse of an otiose deity. His interest was a most active one.

Equally active was his interest in man's moral and social behavior. He was pleased at such moral or social acts as respect and help to the aged and care of the orphans, and was offended by grave breaches of the moral or social order. He bestowed

[12] In 1948 The Boy explained: "The crow is not the kind you see around here now, but a raven,—a bird that is smaller and more streamlined than the crow. The crow here in the fields cry like they are wounded, but this other bird has a shrill but melodious call more like a human being." [R.F.]

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executes the direction or will of the Supreme Being. He is the medium or means by which the Supreme Being works. When a big storm is about to break, a pipe is filled and the Supreme Being is prayed to in the direction from which the storm is coming and is asked to spare the people during this storm, to direct Bha'a not to kill them, to say a word or two to Bha'a himself not to shoot around too close to camp. The people are afraid of Bha'a since he does his job in such a violent way. Even though Bha'a is held in high esteem and is considered an extraordinary being, he is a creature [under control] of the Supreme Being."

Bha'a was closely associated with the Feathered Pipe, not at all with the Flat Pipe.

Bha'a too entered into the Sacrifice Lodge ("Sun dance") as the being who could cause rain and so bring a good season for the food quest and bring coolness and shade in hot weather. While supernatural power was not explicitly sought from Bha'a he might occasionally on his own initiative have pity on a man and give him power to be a great warrior and even to make storms. But on a war expedition the participants would pray to the Supreme Being to be saved from wounds and death; not the slightest thought of Bha'a would enter their minds unless they were overtaken by a bad storm.

It may be added here that, while violent thunderstorms are common in Gros Ventre territory, deaths from lightning are not frequent. The Boy could recall only three such deaths, occurring in Gros Ventre territory during his experience, two on one occasion when he was a young boy and one on a later occasion around 1930.

The word Bha'a is used not only for the Thunderbird but enters into the term also for the water and earth monsters, bha'anbi:'iθän.[16]

The water monster,—or monsters as there appear to be a number of them, for they are reported from various large rivers, and springs where they bathe,—is usually envisioned as a huge,

[16] The Boy explained in 1948: "The word bi:'i0ān includes water bugs, crawling bugs, bugs of all kinds; but a snake is never called bi:'i0ā, nor will a snake ever be called bha'a. Water monster, no manner how many horns he has, or however much he resemble a snake, is always called bha'anbi:'i0ā." [R.F.]

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long, more or less serpent-shaped, being with pointed snout and tail, and with a horn or two horns in its forehead. It lives in its lodge under water, is occasionally seen, snatches bathers or swimmers, and carries them down to its underwater dwelling. Drowned persons are supposed to go to or to be captured and held by the water monster in the after-life. The people made offerings to the water monster or to its youngest offspring, the Last Child (see p. 15), when crossing rivers and on other occasions.

There is a close connection between Bha'a the Thunderbird on the one hand, and these water and earth monsters on the other, but they are quite distinct. During storms the Thunderbird may strike a monster and carry it away as game food up into the clouds to its own mountain-top nest. There is no explicit note of hostility toward the monster.

The following story may illustrate ways of the water monster and the Thunderbird's habit of preying on the water or earth monsters.[17]

When The Boy's father, Lame Bull, was a young man, in the 1840's, three young Gros Ventre younger than Lame Bull,—two of them relatives of Lame Bull,—had gone on a war party down toward the Yellowstone River. The Boy told the story: "They ran before the oncoming storm to take refuge among the rocks on a knoll. When they got within about 100-150 yards of the knoll, lightning struck. All three lost consciousness for a moment and, when they came to, were facing the opposite way. They turned around to go to the rocks on the knoll. As they did so, they saw a cloud right over the knoll and heard a noise as of a struggle going on in the clouds. The cloud started to rise and as it left the ground they could see something hanging down from the cloud, with its head in the cloud. As the cloud went up higher, they could see that the something was some kind of monster, with colors like a snake and striped. The cloud rose higher and higher, seeming to be taking a great monster out of the knoll. Finally the lower end of the monster came into view, struggling as it were. The struggling monster was immense, snake-like in build

[17] Cf. also Kroeber, 1908, pp. 278-80.

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boy. He was so scared, he went insane and died in a few days," according to The Boy.

One story we gathered is about a very big rattlesnake, "as big as a person," big enough to eat a human being and leave only the skeleton. It had a large shining horn. Where it traveled it made a great bare trail like a modern road. It was horned, but was not of the water or earth monster "species." It was shot dead by a young man whom it had molested with murderous design while he was out in the hills crying and sleeping to obtain supernatural power.

In one story, the following, told by Singer, it is not clear whether there is question of a gigantic horned snake or of an earth monster proper.

"Near the head of Snake Butte there is a big cleft which runs all the way to the bottom. The cleft is said to have been made by lightning striking there. My husband Ax Handle [Assiniboine] was there and looked. He thought he saw something and looked again. It was a great big snake with a horn on the top of its head. He was scared and ran away."

A somewhat conspicuous, though very human, role in Gros Ventre ritual and thought was played by the Last Child, ida:sθa, (itasé, "lastly," itasünna, "last;" -tha, "child" [Sifton]; apparently meaning "last child born in a family"). He was the little water snake, offspring of the water monster who figured in the story of He-who-starved-to-death (see No. 5 in Appendix). The Last Child had power in water, sharing to an undefined subordinate degree in the power of his father, the water monster, who was ruler under the water. He, alone or together with his father, was prayed to or given offerings, when the Gros Ventres had to cross rivers or lakes or when they swam or bathed in rivers or pools, lest they drown or be snatched down by the water monster. Early in World War II when a batch of Gros Ventre recruits was about to leave for overseas duty in the Pacific he was prayed to to protect them in crossing the ocean. In praying with a pipe, the Gros Ventres always held it up first to the Supreme Being, but lastly down to the Last Child. In food offerings, the Last Child was invited, last in order, to partake. In the sweat lodge he was mentioned

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776 but not invited to sweat, as he was not considered important enough. In general, while he very frequently enters into ritual, he always enters as the last and least. The water monster was rather feared, but the Last Child was conceived as benevolent and kindly disposed, and both in and outside of ritual observances ran a marked undercurrent of indulgent affectionate amusement, such as the adult male might have toward a liked small child, especially where the Last Child was ritually or otherwise associated with the Supreme Being. The Boy said: "The Gros Ventres all but laugh when the pipe is offered to the Last Child. He suggests something sort of funny to them, while they have only deep reverence for the Supreme Being." As Tom Main put it: "The Last Child [comparatively] does not amount to much. He is always mentioned last [in prayers], but he gets the benefit of tobacco put in the ground [when medicinal herbs are gathered] and food put there [in food offerings]. As far back as I can remember, the people used to laugh when the Last Child was mentioned, but nevertheless he was included in rites." This by no means signifies however that he was laughed *at* or made fun of. The Last Child was, it would seem, a sort of intercessor with his father, to temper the latter's rather maleficent and predatory tendencies.

782 The Last Child was also associated in some manner with the earth or perhaps with the earth monster(s), as food and offerings were put into the ground for him,[14] but the nature of the relationship is not clear. One statement given earlier, that he had a kind of keepership of the earth, looked after it, saw that the grass and trees grew, that the rivers flowed, and so forth, while not contradicted, was not confirmed, by later evidence.

776 823 Regarding the earth, that is, the land or ground, rather than the terrestrial globe as such, there appear to have been differences in ritual usage and perhaps in belief. Some of the Gros Ventres did not mention earth in their prayers. Others habitually did so, naming in order the Supreme Being, the sun, earth, and the Last

[14] In 1948 The Boy added: "Nowadays when they smoke, they offer him one too; and also with whiskey, they spill a little on the ground and say: 'Ida:s0a for a drink.'" [R.F.]

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according to one tradition, in the career of humanity. Some thought World War II was one of these four. The Gros Ventres do not recognize any beings connected or identified with the four winds or four cardinal directions.

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Sometimes another being "Broken Knife" was appealed to in prayers. Little too, is known of him, except that he was, some time in the distant past, a renowned Keeper of the Flat Pipe. According to Al Chandler, Broken Knife was the name of the young man who was first given the Feathered Pipe. (For details, No. 6d in Appendix.) He was asked to pray for the supplicants, just as it was customary for the people to ask living pipe keepers or ex-keepers to pray and intercede for them, "much as Catholics ask the saints to intercede for them."

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Much more is known of He-Who-Starved-To-Death who is associated with the Flat Pipe rite. He was a human being, a Pipe child, second son of a certain keeper of the Flat Pipe in the days when the Gros Ventres dwelt in a land of plenty. It was he who in the course of his adventures encountered and befriended the Last Child, offspring of the water monster, and who on his return home taught the people to pray to the Last Child, and introduced three songs into the Flat Pipe rite. He was also the man who first brought horses to the Gros Ventres. His name was given him by the water monster. (For details see No. 5 in Appendix.) In one Flat Pipe rite he was mentioned in prayers, and in the sweat lodge was invited to sweat.

Well known too is He-who-dreams-of-Bha'a, likewise a human being and a Pipe child, the son of the couple who were first given the Feathered Pipe by Bha'a, and who lived when the Gros Ventres had already gotten horses and had reached their historic habitat, but before the advent of the whites. He got power from Bha'a to be a great warrior, and he gave himself his name. (For details see No. 7 in Appendix.) While closely associated with the Feathered Pipe, he was not, so far as we could discover, prayed to.

In general, lesser beings that had no human body were called tciya:tawu:nitä (sing., lit., "false person": tciyattawu, false [Sifton], initä, human being). This category included such minor

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power from the "ghost men" by sleeping near their pictographs, but never with any success. One young man, however, once without quest got power in childbirth cases from a boss of little children who appear to him in a dream, and Singer thought these "little children" were "ghost men," but the identification is doubtful. The only message they ever got from the "ghost men" was a request or demand that the Gros Ventres go away at once as they smelt bad or made the place smell bad. On war parties or other occasions, offerings were made at the pictograph cliff to the "ghost men," who would then during the night make new pictographs on the morrow from which the future in the form of good or bad fortune could be easily foreseen by the members of the party.[20]

Supernatural power was gotten either by quest or otherwise from ghosts or, as more commonly, from non-human beings, such as mountains (or the spirit who inhabited or owned the mountains), rocks, mammals (bear, wolf, weasel, mink, coyote, rat, prairie dog and others), birds (crow, prairie chicken), snakes, spiders and so forth. "These lesser beings, while ranking a little above human beings and possessing certain superhuman powers, were under the leadership and control of the Supreme Being, from whom they had received such powers to be imparted in turn to human beings. Like Bha'a, they were, so to speak, delegated agents and underlings of the Supreme Being, put by him in charge of "the details of the whole situation," as The Boy expressed it. The powers so imparted were of many kinds, to cure, to poison or otherwise harm, to foretell, to become a great warrior, to acquire wealth, to succeed in love and gambling, et cetera, as will be described in detail later.

Non-Cult Beings

So much for the beings to whom cult was rendered in the form of prayer or sacrifice. We shall now describe the supernatural beings,—human, "humanoid" and non-human,—to whom no cult was rendered but who entered in one form or other into ritual

[20] Cf. Flannery, 1953, p. 93.

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and who was floating on the raft with the Flat Pipe, whether he may then have gone to the whites and taught them, too, how to pray; but all this he considers speculation only.

It should be emphasized that as previously noted, no sacrifices or prayers were ever offered by the Gros Ventres to Ni:həhat himself, nor, it may be here added, to Earthmaker. The Boy once said to his father, Lame Bull: "You talk so much about Ni:həhat. He was a superhuman. He should have been prayed to." "No," Lame Bull replied, "he never told the people to pray to him, but told them to pray to the Supreme Being. He was a man and not worthy to be prayed to."

Earthmaker was the human being, apparently a or the primeval keeper of the Flat Pipe, who knowing the earth was to be covered with water made a raft of logs on which he and the Flat Pipe floated during the great flood.[22] (See full story, No. 3 in Appendix.) Where he came from is unknown. Landing on a mountain top he there made dry land (not *the* earth, the terrestrial globe as such which already existed), and also made a man and woman. He gave the Flat Pipe into the keeping of the man he had made, and taught him the Flat Pipe rite, instructed him how to carry out the rite and to plant tobacco, and told the people how to worship the Supreme Being. The Flat Pipe rite has been known ever since that time. Earthmaker is mentioned only in the Flat Pipe rite. After giving the pipe and the above instructions, he disappeared, and what became of him, whether he died or not, is not known.

Ghosts were called tsë:k. Another name for ghosts was byi'te:' a word that "gives the impression like a hollow-eyed bleached-out skull." An occasional ancestral ghost became the guardian helper of a surviving relative.[23] Gambling power might also be gotten from a ghost. Most ghosts were in their own future abode and did not have any contact at all with the living. In general, apart

[22] He was not floating in the Pipe bowl; this is the Arapaho version.

[23] In 1948 The Boy explained: "Tciya:təwu:nitän (see p. 19) are not tsë:k; tsë:k is the opposite of everything good—you can cuss by calling someone tsë:k. Byi'te:' is even worse. The ancestral ghost is tsätsuwa'a, not tsë:k. Shadow, soul, spirit, echo is bətäto:u. [R.F.]

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mon pipe in his hands, it was forbidden for anyone to pass in front of him, under penalty of some evil befalling the culprit.

If a person, wanting something in a hurry from the keeper, such as meat or a bit of tobacco, just poked his (or her) head in the door of the keeper's lodge and made his request, no one inside would answer him. He would have to go all the way in, proceeding clockwise, make his request, and go out clockwise, not back out.

When the co-keeper gave a visitor something to eat in the Pipe lodge, the receiver had to eat it there and not take it out, unless someone told war stories. No one was allowed to take or grab anything seen in the Pipe lodge.

The keeper and co-keeper were by virtue of their office "holy" persons, that is, endowed with supernatural powers. Some of these powers were related directly to their main task as custodians of the Pipe, leaders in its ritual, and intercessors with the supernatural world, and will be described under the ritual of the Pipe. Others were conferred on them at or subsequent to the transfer rite, partly to enable them to command the respect due them, partly to give them supernatural efficiency for their own or their people's advantage,—the former being mostly powers to harm, the latter mostly powers to help.

If anyone were guilty of disrespect to the keeper or co-keeper, there were several avenging procedures to which they could resort.

During the transfer rite, the keeper and co-keeper were taught some form of cursing, so they would be properly respected. If they wished evil on anyone, the evil would come to pass. Deer, an ex-keeper who gave Lame Bull much of the latter's coaching for the keepership, told him after his mouth had been consecrated: "Be careful what you say. For if you utter an evil wish on anybody, the wish will come true." This power, it may be added, is more or less of a piece with the commonly possessed efficacy attributed in Gros Ventre idealogy to serious good or evil wish-thought. (See pp. 364-370.)

Deer also taught Lame Bull in his early keepership another harming power, but cautioned him not to use it unless someone failed to show proper respect to him as keeper. This power worked by "sympathetic" magic. Deer asked for a little pup and a piece of sinew. When these were brought he said: "Leave the pup near

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788 first contact with whites they found that among these latter too singing had in similar fashion degenerated.
533 Among the birds and animals it was otherwise. They continued to sing as they had done at the earthmaking. They held fast to the privilege given them and did not abuse it or let their singing degenerate. So it was that the Gros Ventres used to go to the tops of buttes, hills and high mountains and to streams and forests, begging these animals and birds to give them songs, and in this measure to restore singing to its former purpose and dignity. But later the Gros Ventres sometimes prevailed even upon the animals and birds to teach them "no-good songs."

Nevertheless in spite of all this badness and degeneration the Gros Ventres never lost sight of the fact that they depended on the Supreme Being for everything. So whenever they had occasion to pray and perform their ceremonies, they sang. And with such sacred singing was so intimately associated the use of the pipe
[276 and tobacco that "one could hardly separate singing and pipe-
●782] smoking." In nearly all rites they entered in as a means of imploring the Supreme Being to grant the people's requests. The Gros Ventres learned by experience that if they sang and smoked and followed faithfully the rest of the Flat Pipe ritual, they could at least hope for a hearing by the Supreme Being. Smoking too, it may be added, like singing, later degenerated, a point to which we shall come presently.

533 Practically every Gros Ventre ceremony or social event began or was accompanied with song. And each of the many Gros Ventre songs had to be used on certain and only certain specified occasions. Thus, for example, it would not do at all to sing Pipe songs during social dances or in a hand game or at "good-time" gatherings. Each religious or secular occasion had its own song or set of songs. Very commonly a story teller would in the course of his or her narrative sing the song or songs the characters in the story were supposed to have sung.

Many Gros Ventre songs were wordless. In most of the worded ones, the words consisted of short pregnant phrases or sentences preceded and followed by wordless singing.

Two kinds of singers were recognized and distinguished: those who had good voices, and those who had knowledge of the

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from which it was made, inao:, a term not used for white traders' paint. 386 [788]

The Gros Ventres used to get it out in the hills on Stiffarm Creek at Curly Head's place. It occurs as a yellow clay or dirt, as a yellow strip or streak in whitish banks or hillsides, or sometimes it was dug up from the ground. Not everyone could gather it; never men even in the old days, although in recent times Little Man used to do so; but only old women, and only certain ones at that. Coming Daylight's grandmother used to gather it and so did Coming Daylight herself who learned the method and ritual of gathering and preparing it from her grandmother. Singer's grandmother used to gather and prepare it, but she herself did not want to do it, although she had the chance to learn from her grandmother. The art and rite were "kind of handed down."

When about to gather the yellow clay, the woman would sit by the deposit, smoke, and while smoking pray that the clay she was about to gather would be abundant and good. An offering, usually of tobacco, was left at the spot. Both in gathering and in baking the clay the woman had to be alone. [782]

The baking of the clay was done at night by the woman who had gathered it. The children could not be around making a noise, and she herself had to be very quiet. She would make a sort of batter of the clay by mixing it with water, and would knead it into flat round cakes with a round hole in the center. A fire, formerly of buffalo chips, more recently of cow manure, was made, and when it died down to coals, the cakes were put at the bottom, covered up with live coals, and a fire built on top. The woman baking did not blow the fire and she shut everything up. If you blew on the fire the whole paint would disappear. The baking had to be done very skillfully to turn out just right. The baking was fraught with some danger, and some fear went with it. If the cakes baked too brown, this was a bad omen. When the cakes were baked sufficiently all the coals were removed and the cakes, blackened on the surface, were taken out and allowed to cool. The black surface was scraped away, leaving the clay now burnt red. This red clay was then pounded to fine powder on a piece of rawhide. [372] [787]

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dren, grown-ups too who would accompany the children to escort them and to see that they behaved properly would take advantage of the occasion to be painted. 796*

The painting might be done as the result of a suggestion or direction given the keeper in a dream, to paint the faces of the children and, apparently, of the adults too.

A person might also make a vow to have himself painted. The keeper would then call the ex-keepers together, make a smudge, and sing the face painting song (No. 39). In this simple rite, the keeper and/or co-keeper painted the vower and others who came in.

The making of offerings to the Flat Pipe, called "covering" or "wrapping" the Pipe, was a major aspect of the Flat Pipe cult, the most important private or personal aspect of it, as distinct from the more elaborate public Pipe ceremonies participated in by considerable numbers of all of the people. Such "covering" could be done by anybody at any time, with or without previous vow or notification of keeper. Sometimes, as noted earlier (p. 101), such offerings were made just before a seasonal rite and entitled the giver to a seat in the keeper's lodge during the rite. As a rule, however, "covering" the Pipe was a ceremony to itself, a simple one independent of all others.

"Covering" the Pipe was done, commonly in fulfillment of a promise or vow, in case of illness, danger, or other emergency affecting the giver or a relative or friend, or, apart from any emergency, to obtain good health and long life. Covering was a sacrifice of petition or thanksgiving or both. Forgiveness and atonement purposes were quite absent, so far as we could discover. 782● 796*

The offerings more commonly consisted of skin robes, later of textiles. Sometimes tobacco was given, and after a buffalo hunt choice bits of the meat. The textiles offered were such goods as flannel, calico, percale, shawls, blankets. (Some of the offerings can be seen on tripod of Flat Pipe, Plate 11B.) When Singer covered the Pipe she usually offered a robe made of three yards of black flannel, costing about $2.00 a yard. Mary Eraux' mother used also to give three yards of goods as a covering. Black was the preferred color for textile "coverings" because this was the color the Pipe liked best.

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Hunters returning from a successful buffalo chase would select pieces of kidney (a special delicacy) and ribs, and put them on top of the Pipe bundle. In recent times, money offerings occur. Offerings for the Pipe have become increasingly infrequent; offerings are now usually made instead by the Gros Ventres, all of whom are Catholics, to the Mission Church or at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Little Rockies on the Mission grounds.

A promise or vow to cover the Pipe, made silently or aloud, would be worded, "I vow to cover (or wrap) the Flat Pipe," rather than "I vow to give something to the Flat Pipe."

During our field work in 1940, when Coming Daylight was telling among other things what she knew of the Flat Pipe and its ritual, one evening (Aug. 16) she heard that her grandchild was seriously ill. Thereupon she went outside a little distance and holding both arms up, palms out, looking up and facing toward where the Flat Pipe was she spoke and prayed: "I am telling about you. I am telling everything straight. I suppose you hear everything, and must know that I am telling everything straight. I am telling the truth and nothing but the truth. Look at me. Have pity on me and upon all the rest of the people. Take away all bad things that go around here on earth. Have pity so my grandchild may get well. I promise to put a robe on you. I hear you value black more than anything, and that is what I shall get you. I hear my grandchild though still sick is better." In this case, as Coming Daylight explained, she was "talking right to the Pipe."

In a long discussion, a couple of days later (Aug. 20, 1940), with The Boy, he emphasized that while a person covering the Flat Pipe had great reverence for it and would address it by its own two names, Flat Pipe and Little Turtle, the Pipe itself was only a medium by which the Supreme Being was petitioned or thanked. A man, for instance, in sudden imminent danger would perhaps, praying in his heart and mind, mention only the Pipe, but he would know what the Pipe represented, namely, only a powerful means used so that his prayer would be hearkened to by the Supreme Being. We may add incidentally that mention in the course of this discussion of the Sinkaetk custom of praying to the sweat-lodge caused hearty laughter by The Boy and Thomas Main.

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The man or woman about to cover the Pipe would bring the offering to the keeper's lodge, enter it and proceeding clockwise put the offering on top of the bundle, draped or wrapped lengthwise if a robe or textile with the ends hanging loose, and saying: "Here's your wrapping, Flat Pipe (or Little Turtle). This is what I promised you. I have carried out my vow." Meanwhile the keeper would have put peppermint on the sacred hearth to make a smudge. The coverer would touch the Pipe bundle, put his or her arms around it, and might pray at length, asking and thanking for favors.

The keeper, too, might pray, and might paint the face of the coverer with red bands across the forehead, and under the jaws and chin, and three dots, one on each cheek bone and one on the bridge of the nose,—the band on the forehead representing the above; that under the jaws and chin, the earth; the dots on the cheeks, sundogs.

It was a common custom for the keeper or his wife to provide a meal for the coverer. When Mary Eraux' mother used to cover the Pipe, the co-keeper would say: "Whenever anybody gives my Pipe a robe, I always feed them." So her mother would come back after a little while and eat. If the coverer had just eaten and when so offered food could not eat it, in order to take it home to eat he would have to pay a small "fine," e.g., a pocketknife or handkerchief, or to tell the required number of personal war-deeds, or else the keeper might volunteer to tell his own.

When some years ago Coming Daylight returned from Yellowstone Park with a sack of real buffalo chips, she went to the house of Horse Capture, the Flat Pipe keeper at the time. He at once made a smudge. She removed the "coverings" from off the Pipe bundle, put a new robe on the outside case of the bundle, put her arms around the bundle, and said to the Pipe: "I want you to have mercy [pity] on me. I am looking for good health, and good health for my children so they will grow up to be strong." Then she went on and made quite a long prayer, and at the end put all the "coverings" back on the bundle. Then she left the house, returned entering the house by the kitchen to observe the clockwise rule, gave Horse Capture and his wife the precious

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buffalo chips she had brought back, and sat down. They then heard a "terrible groan" from the room where the Pipe was kept. Horse Capture and his wife seemed surprised and did not know what to make of it. The groan sounded to Coming Daylight more as if it said "Yes." After this all sat down to dinner. Afterwards Horse Capture's wife gave Coming Daylight a big buggy-parasol, a very expensive present. "They never say: 'I give you this for that,' but any little thing you do for the Pipe, like picking mint for it, the co-keeper would give you something for it."

When a number of "coverings" would accumulate on the Pipe bundle they would be hung elsewhere in the keeper's lodge, and from time to time the "coverings" would have to be ritually disposed of by the keeper with the full sweat-lodge rite. The keeper would detail a couple of young men to help him prepare the "coverings" and to make the sweat-lodge. The "coverings" might be tied to the sweat-lodge pole, as in the seasonal rite, or might just be brought as such by the co-keeper or an attendant to the sweat-lodge. Here, in the latter case, before the sweating proper began, they were brought in clockwise and given to the keeper. He would dip his right hand in the black charcoal paint, and touch each covering three times in three different places. Then he would gather up all the coverings, lift them up over the ascending smudge, lower them in three stages, move them around in three clockwise circles, and hand the whole bunch to the first man on his left, from whom it was successively passed till it reached the door. Here attendant two took the bunch of coverings and deposited it on the top of the mound in front of the sweat-lodge.

The coverings were finally taken by one of the attendants way out on the hills or elsewhere, as was done with other offerings. Or else the keeper could call together the orphans and other poorer children and distribute the coverings to them, for it was believed that being good to children, especially needy and orphaned ones, was pleasing to the Supreme Being. Coming Daylight's uncle, Crow Bull, when keeper of the Flat Pipe, used to distribute the coverings to the very poor and needy old folks. If among the coverings there was tobacco, this was not deposited out on the hills but was given to the old people. The buffalo

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kidneys and ribs offered as "coverings" after a hunt were left all day on the bundle and late in the evening given to some of the very poor children to eat.

Moving, carrying and handling the Flat Pipe bundle in camp and on the march were the exclusive responsibility and privilege of the Flat Pipe co-keeper. Whenever the bundle was to be transferred from its tripod to its bed or vice versa, to be hung up over the door of the keeper's lodge, to be carried to and from the sweat lodge or Sacrifice Dance, or to be transported from camp site to camp site, she was the one to do it.

Exceptions to the rule, in emergency, were rare. One such exceptional instance was reported by Coming Daylight. On one occasion the Flat Pipe bundle was still outside the keeper's lodge when darkness set in, and both the keeper and co-keeper were away. In such a case an ex-co-keeper would usually substitute for the co-keeper, but there was none around. It was not customary to leave the Pipe out at night, or even to leave it alone. So Coming Daylight's maternal aunt said to her: "We will put this poor thing [the Pipe] in. Your father once owned a pipe [not the Flat Pipe], so you should not be afraid to handle it." So the two went out and gathering sage rubbed themselves all over with it. Then together they unloosed the bundle and started to carry it in, all the time praying: "We are children of an ex-keeper and this is just the same as if our fathers owned this Pipe. We have the right to handle it. We hate to see you stay out over night. It would be bad if you stayed out. We are bringing you in because we pity you. We hope you will have pity on us, and that we will have long life." And Coming Daylight, about 86 years old in 1940, ended her account by remarking that her prayer was heard because she had lived so long, even though in these last years her legs were unsteady and every little while she fell down on her buttocks!

Coming Daylight also mentioned one other old woman, Mouse, who, although not the co-keeper, used to volunteer to carry the Pipe bundle on her back when the people were on the march from camp site to camp site. This was apparently at a period when horses were very scarce, only one or two to several families, and dog travois had to be resorted to.

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ing the Dance came right after the Pipe or Pipes. If there were no sacred pipe with the caravan, the chief or head man rode first in the line of march.

On the march, which was ordinarily at a slow pace, no one stopped to smoke or for other reason unless the co-keeper halted. When they stopped, usually about half-way, she would hang the bundle on the tripod, all by itself away from and well forward of the crowd in the direction of the trek. All stopped behind it; they did not surround it; it was always ahead of them in the direction they were heading. No one moved to re-start ahead until the co-keeper did so.

If the route of march necessitated crossing a big river, such as the Missouri River, the procedure in Coming Daylight's words, was as follows. "They put the Flat Pipe bundle in a bullboat. Of course there was no child in the bullboat. They chose two young men, popular and heroes, to lead that bullboat across. These two would be all painted red. They had robes rolled up and when they got midway across the river they put the robes in the water as offerings. As soon as they started across my grandmother up on the cliff at the river's edge would start cheering and singing the victory song. This song is a strong-heart song. When there was something hard to do they sang this song. They would say the names of the two young men and sing this song to encourage them. They all moved the bullboat into the water and different people would put into it various things to be thrown into the middle of the river. The keeper and co-keeper who owned the Pipe were not supposed to swim or bathe in water. Both could ride in this bullboat with the Pipe, but the woman always did. The two young men [on horseback apparently] held the robes [offering mentioned above] in one hand and pulled the bullboat with the other. The Pipe in the bullboat was the first of the caravan to cross the river. After all the people had gotten across the old women had a victory dance and sang for the crossing."

On arrival at the new camp site the co-keeper would hang the Pipe bundle on the tripod at a spot just to the north of where the keeper's lodge was to be erected. Then the new sage bed and sacred hearth were made, and the bundle brought into the lodge,

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778 with the rites previously described. On a day's journey it may be noted, the bundle would have been placed on the tripod in the open three times: before starting out, about half-way, and on arrival at the new camp.

782 The killing of a pure white buffalo, a pure albino,—always a cow never a bull, according to Gros Ventre tradition,—was an extremely [224] rare occurrence. The killer could keep it himself, give it to the Flat Pipe keeper, or offer it as a sacrifice. This sacrificial rite was last held when the Boy's father, Lame Bull was a young man, probably in the 1850's, and served as a calendrical date: "at the time the white buffalo skin was offered as a sacrifice." The Boy, our sole informant on this rite, could give only fragmentary data on it, gotten from his father who had witnessed only that one time in his life.

If the killer chose to offer the albino skin as a sacrifice, he had to vow, and then had formally to notify the keeper of the Flat Pipe. Carrying it he went clockwise round the camp circle on the inside and brought it to the keeper's lodge. The keeper painted [302] the man's face with charcoal paint (not red), the ritual color for sacrifices, with a circular band around his face, on the forehead, the sides of the cheeks near [illegible] and under the jawbones and chin, and with also a star on the bridge of his nose. The circle, Lame Bull told the Boy, represented the sundog; the star, the sun. A procession in which the keeper, co-keeper, Pipe child, ex-keepers, ex-co-keepers, the two attendants, and all the people took part started at the keeper's lodge and marched clockwise all around the camp circle, very slowly, with three stops (probably at the west, east and south) for prayer, till they reached the sweat-lodge near the keeper's lodge. The albino skin was given a touch of charcoal paint, as in other sacrifices, but The Boy did not know other details of the special rite used in preparing the skin, nor did he know who carried it in the procession. On arrival of the procession at the sweat lodge, the main body of the people went away, but the small group who were to sweat remained and went through the whole sweat-lodge rite at which the albino skin was hung up on the sweat-lodge pole and after which, in accord-

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ance with given practice it must have been carried away on a hill or elsewhere.[1]

[1] In 1948 The Boy gave a detailed description of the rite should the killer of an albino or "beaver" buffalo present the skin to the Pipe, rather than offer it as a sacrifice. He said that in this case, the man presented the green hide to the Pipe with a ritual directed by the keeper and included the painting of the donor. The keeper then called in two young women known to be expert tanners, received them ritually, and instructed them in procedures to be followed in tanning this particular hide. He made a crown, bracelets and anklets of twisted sage for each woman while singing a special song (not recorded by Cooper). When the hide was dressed there was a big feast at the keeper's lodge at which the keeper ritually painted the skin red. The keeper gave the donor of the skin the choice of any horse from all except one of his herd; to each of the women tanners he gave three valuable presents. [R.F.]

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793 years before her father's keepership was the one who was asked to "confirm" the appointment of Garter Snake [ritual details not obtainable by us] and was given a good horse for performing the ceremony.

The Pipe was addressed and spoken of as the child of the keeper and co-keeper, and they looked upon themselves as the father and mother of the Pipe. When the Pipe talked to them in their dreams it addressed them as "father" and "mother" respectively. To the Pipe child, the Pipe was brother. The Pipe was very jealous, and wanted to be the lone child and so all the keeper's children except the Pipe child were supposed to be put out of the keeper's lodge. According to Garter Snake, however, her father's other children slept in his lodge, not however with the keeper and co-keeper but in separate beds. Garter Snake herself when very young slept with her parents, but later on a separate bed near the foot of theirs. Al Chandler when he was a little boy used to stay with his grandfather, Sitting High, then keeper. The latter would make a bed for the boy right under the Pipe—"which usually was not allowed, but he did it because I was an orphan, and he would pray that I would be healthy, live to old age, and everything like that. He did that every night as long as I was there."

[782]

If a new keeper happened to have a young wife with an infant, they were sent to another lodge.

Some of the activities, duties, and attitudes of a Pipe child can be gathered from the following account by Garter Snake of her own experiences.

"When I was the Pipe child, whenever my mother took the Pipe bundle outside of the lodge, I took the tripod out after her. I was told how to set the tripod when the camp was about to move, with two of the legs close together and the third far out. Whenever my father made smudge with pine needles, he would give me some and I would chew them and would hold my hands over the smudge. Then I would rub my left palm up my right arm, my right palm up my left arm, then both palms from the top of my head down the sides of my neck and down my breast.

"I did not have any duties beyond helping my mother when she brought the Pipe bundle out and brought it in.

[784]

"I was forbidden to pick peppermint. If peppermint was mixed

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in dried pounded meat, I was not allowed to eat the meat. If a coyote or wolf were killed, I was not supposed to touch it. These were the only two prohibitions I was under.

"If anybody vowed to be painted by the keeper, I would be present at the rite next to my mother and sit there through the ceremony.

"Whenever while I was Pipe child I got sick my father would put pine needles on me, and then he would take down the bundle and put it on my parents' bed, and would say to me: 'Put your arms around your brother [the Pipe] and pray to your brother so you may get well.' The Pipe keeper and his wife claim the Feathered Pipe as their son and tell their children that the Pipe is their brother. When I put my arms around the Pipe I was told to say to the Pipe: 'My dear brother, have pity on me, that I may get well of my illness.'

"Of course the Pipe was not human but because I was a baby when my father got it I grew up with it and thought just as much of it as of my own blood relatives. When my father transferred the Pipe to Sitting High I was outside playing. When I was coming home I saw the bundle at Sitting High's door, and when I saw it I started to cry, and when I saw my father I said to him: 'Why did you give my Pipe away?' It was just like a person leaving. I was lonesome for it, and felt just as if I had lost a relative or friend. And all through my life I have felt the same toward it. All through my life I have made it a point to be present at any Feathered Pipe ceremony. And whenever I went to any ceremony, I would bring something for it. Since I joined the Catholic Church I stopped doing this, but even now I feel: 'It's all alone. I pity it.'

"When while I was Pipe child I had been out playing and in the evening would come home and see the Pipe bundle over the door, I would stand and look at it a long time and would say: 'Feathered Pipe, I am going into our lodge now.' Once when I was sitting on the bed in the lodge I got to thinking, and all the folks were there, and I said: 'Feathered Pipe, my dear brother, look down on me and watch over me.' I was not told to say this, and I do not know what made me say this prayer to the Feathered Pipe.

"My father used to tell me: 'This Pipe was given by the Su-

788 exceptionally chewed in contrast to the Flat Pipe peppermint. A
824 bag, painted red all over, about a foot square, and fringed on three sides but with no beading or other decoration, now hangs with the
[415] bundle and served, Al Chandler thought, as a container for the dried sweet pine needles.

802 The ritual number of the Feathered Pipe, running all through the songs and ceremonies, was four, from the days of the first keeper down to most recent times.

534 The musical instrument used to accompany the songs was, likewise from the time of the first keeper, the drum. According to
778 Garter Snake, the first keeper's drum was painted half black to represent black [storm] clouds and half red to represent the earth. According to Al Chandler, the present drum, about 16 inches in diameter and two inches deep, has a figure of a thunderbird
[532] painted in blue on the drumhead against a red background, to represent Bha'a, with zigzag yellow lines from either side of the head to the wings, to represent lightning. A long string is tied to the drum. The drumstick is painted red, the distal end being covered with buckskin "stuffed with something like cotton." Curly Head, when keeper, never used the drum, or even took it out of its covering in which it hung next to the bundle, but Sitting High used it regularly with the songs.*

788 According to Garter Snake, the first keeper had somebody make
778 him a wooden bowl, which still hangs with, not in, the Pipe bundle, but we obtained no information on its type or use. She also stated that the first keeper had a "gourd rattle" or four rattles, but Al Chandler never saw any rattle kept or used with the Feathered Pipe, and no other informant mentioned such.

● [782] The Feathered Pipe, like the Flat Pipe, was smoked, in fulfillment of vows, but very rarely. More commonly, in contrast with the Flat Pipe, it was danced with, earlier only by the keeper, in recent decades by others.

788 General ritual features common to the Feathered Pipe and Flat Pipe,—clockwise movement, singing, the use of paint, of buffalo chips, and of sage, tobacco, larb and wild parsley,—have

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* The drum used in the 1951 rite was apparently undecorated. See Plate 2 C. [R.F.]

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"No, I might get fits." Little Man said: "I will eat it." This he then did. Al was worried about him and did not go to work, for he thought the old man would have fits, but actually nothing happened to him.

The Feathered Pipe was given originally by Bha'a or by the Supreme Being through Bha'a, who had control of thunderstorms. While individual petitioners in simpler rites such as covering the Pipe often addressed the Pipe itself in their prayers, and while in even more formal rites Bha'a was addressed, it appears to have been generally understood that the final word lay with the Supreme Being. The Pipe was given to pray through rather than to pray to, and Bha'a while exercising a certain autonomy in his office as ruler of thunderstorms exercised it as agent of and subordinate to the Supreme Being, and in the more formal ritual prayers of the Feathered Pipe, the Supreme Being's name always came first.

Feathered Pipe rites were carried out mostly and mainly, although not exclusively, to ask for rain and for protection against threatening thunderstorms or against lightning and destructive high winds during them, and sometimes for cessation of floods and rains. Often however major or minor rites were carried out, with or without previous promise or vow, for ends not connected with weather, to ask for cure in illness, escape from grave danger, safe return from a war expedition, and so forth. In times of drought, Bha'a would be asked for rain. In the more elaborate rites commonly held each spring, petition would be made "To have rain and [in recent decades] good crops and grass, . . . to bless the earth so everybody will be happy and healthy and no bad luck for anybody all summer, so they [all the people] will live 'till next spring,' that is, so when this time of the year comes around again they will be here."

The more solemn Feathered Pipe rites, those at least which involved the sweat-lodge ceremony and the unwrapping of the Pipe bundle, were performed only during the period of the year when thunderstorms could be expected, namely from spring through to fall, and never during the winter months. The Pipe could, however be "covered" at any time of the year. In contrast to the Flat Pipe cycle, seasonal rites proper did not occur, although some rite was

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782 Vows could be made just to see the Pipe. The vower would give money or a blanket or horse in payment: Everybody else who wanted to take a look had likewise to make some payment, putting down the payment after coming into the lodge. The men had to leave their hats outside the lodge. The observers were not painted during the rite. The co-keeper, as usual, handled the bundle itself, and the untying and unwrapping of the bundle and Pipe case were carried out with the usual ceremonies and songs. The sacred objects were spread out and the Pipe itself exposed. None of the observers was permitted to touch or pick up the Pipe or the sacred objects, under penalty of "getting fits" from the protective wild parsley. If requested by one of the observers, the co-keeper would lift the cover of the Human Face sufficiently to allow a glimpse. The rite ended with the usual terminal feast.

Anyone could vow to pray with the Human Face which was in the Feathered Pipe bundle. The payment,—maybe a horse and a little money,—was not so great as the payment for dancing with the Pipe. A double lodge was erected for the rite. The Human Face was not danced with, and, during Sitting High's keepership was not exposed for this rite. The vower was merely allowed to hold the Face in its thick wrappings and to pray to it for anything he wanted. At a later date, Curly Head when keeper exposed the Face often, a practice that ran counter to the older tradition and that was criticized as commercialization. Sitting High had exposed the Face to view only once or twice, so far as Al Chandler had heard, in the course of his three decades or more of keepership. Whether such exposure of the Face as occurred was part of the vowed praying with it or a separate function was not made clear to us.

A vow to make a sweat-lodge for the Feathered Pipe, similar *mutatis mutandis* to the corresponding Flat Pipe one, was carried out in fulfillment of a request made to a man in a dream, or of a vow made, for example, by a young man going off on a war party to ask good luck and a safe return,—the young man in the case providing the requisite offerings.

Our very incomplete information on the Feathered Pipe rite carried out in fulfillment of a vow to be painted comes from Al Chandler, Garter Snake and Charles Buckman.

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According to Al Chandler, if some one were ill a near relative would vow to be painted and would go to the keeper. The sweat-lodge rite was first gone through. After this, in the keeper's lodge, the keeper would take the paint from the Pipe bundle, make a smudge as usual, sing the songs, dip his finger in the paint, and hold it up while addressing the Supreme Being and add: "This man vowed to you that he wanted to be painted with your paint so that his child might live," or similar words. Then he repeated the same thing to the Pipe. Then he painted first the vower, and afterwards he painted the men and male children present and the co-keeper, the women and female children,—the males with a curved band on the forehead near the hair line, the females with dots, one on the forehead and one on each cheek. This painting could take place any time in the year. 782 302

According to Garter Snake, in case of dangerous or critical illness, the vower would promise to cook up lots of food and have the keeper open up the Pipe bundle and paint the vower. If the vower were a man he was painted with the sacred red paint by the keeper; if a woman, by the co-keeper. The Pipe child would sit with the co-keeper during the rite. All the men, women and children who could attend would come to the keeper's lodge and be painted. Any ex-keepers and ex-co-keepers present would not be painted by the keeper and co-keeper as they would paint themselves. 782 755

According to Charles Buckman, it was customary to unwrap the Pipe bundle at this vowed painting rite.

Apart from this vowed rite, ritual face painting was also, as previously noted, a common feature of the Feathered Pipe dancing ceremony. In addition, according to Jim Shortman, if the Feathered Pipe keeper were told in a dream by the owl that sickness was coming to the camp, he would call all the children and infants together with the grown-ups to his lodge and would paint every individual. 302 751 782

Offerings to cover the Feathered Pipe could be made by anyone, at any time of the year, winter included, more frequently with, but often without, previous vow. They were commonly made for cure in cases of illness. The original first owner of the Pipe had told the people: "If you are sick, you can make a vow to cover the Pipe, and thus get well." But covering occurred also on other 782

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●782 occasions. Whenever, for instance, Garter Snake went to a Feathered Pipe ceremony, she would bring some offering for the Pipe; and if the keeper, as previously noted, dreamed of ill luck about to befall somebody in camp, he would counsel the person to make some offering.

In the olden days dressed skins of deer, antelope or other animal were the most common offerings; in more recent times, flannel or other textiles,[10] preferably black, the Pipe's favorite color. The Feathered and Flat Pipes appear to have received about equal numbers of offerings. Some devotees, such as Singer and Mary Ereaux' mother, would as a rule make it a point to cover both Pipes whenever they made Pipe offerings, with three yards of cloth for each. Mary Ereaux' mother felt that both Pipes were "the same" and she did not want to be "partial."

When the giver laid the offering on the Pipe bundle, he or she would talk first to the Supreme Being, then to the Pipe, and afterwards *ad libitum* to the two-headed bird or any other sacred object or objects in the bundle.

When the offerings accumulated, the keeper would have a sweat-lodge made and they would be hung up on the pole in front of the lodge. After the sweating was over, the offerings would be disposed of in the usual way, by deposition on a high hill with prayers by the selected depositor. Sitting High, at least, used sometimes to distribute them, or some of them, after the sweating rite, to poor and needy children.

* 796 Most of the rites we have been describing were carried out in fulfillment of vows. Two other series of rites and observances, non-vowed ordinarily, may now be dealt with: The one series, distinctly religious rites, performed as occasion demanded or suggested, which we are calling rites of occasion; the other series, in which the religious element was in most cases only marginal, which we are calling observances. The rites of occasion may be classified into rain, flood, storm, and doctoring ceremonies. In passing we may mention that the Feathered Pipe, unlike the Flat Pipe, did not enter in any manner into the sacred Sacrifice Dance.

The more solemn Feathered Pipe rite usually held in the spring

[10] See Plate 2 B. Note cloth offerings behind Feathered Pipe tripod. [R.F.]

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Pipe, some individuals or whole bands would consider the Sacrifice Dance as greatest, would give first preference to the Sacrifice Dance as a means of worshiping the Supreme Being, or would think of the Sacrifice Dance and other Sacred Dances as supreme. Then there were other individuals and bands who would prefer to worship through the Pipe *and* the Sacrifice Dance, or through the Pipe *and* some other Sacred Lodge."

Among the reasons he and other informants gave for ranking the Flat Pipe rite above the Sacrifice Dance were the connection of the Pipe with the creation and history of the world and man, the donation of the Pipe by the Supreme Being, the rigidly determined and scrupulously observed ritual, the absence of all vulgar elements from the Pipe celebrations (as contrasted with some at least of the Sacred Dances). Reasons given for ranking the Sacrifice Dance above the other dances were that the Flat Pipe entered into active participation in the Sacrifice Dance and it alone entailed dire hardships in the way of self-torture, hunger and thirst.

The Sacrifice Dance was held only when some man had vowed it. A woman could not vow it, but, to judge from the story of First Singer, could vow to request a man to hold the Dance. A given man could vow to hold the dance as principal actor in it only once in his lifetime, but he could join the dance as an active associate participant a number of times. Once he had gone through it in fulfillment of a vow, he could serve as ceremonial grandfather on a later occasion to another who wanted to go through it.

The vow was made to the Supreme Being. In the story of First Singer, however, whether her vow was made to the Supreme Being or to the sun or to both is not clear.

If the vow were made in, say, midwinter, its fulfillment would be deferred until about June or when the spring vegetation was well advanced. In the meantime the vower might choose his grandfather and a crier, the formal public announcement of the vow might be made, and the preliminary four nights of singing might be gone through. Before the dance began this good-time singing, by men and women jointly, took place on four separate nights, not necessarily successive ones, but any nights during the preceding month or year. The fourth of these, however, had to

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*796 ●782 be on the night immediately preceding the beginning of the Dance rite proper.

[785] Usually others besides the principal vower would vow to join the dance and to pierce their breasts with skewers. These associate vowers would also choose each his own grandfather and, with the help of his own crier, have the same formal public announcement made of his vow as in the case of the principal vower.

As proximate preparation for the Dance, if the bands were scattered at the time, the principal vower would send out young men as runners to summon the bands to foregather for the dance. Attendance was obligatory for all.

The principal vower set up his lodge in the center of the camp circle, and here headquarters were established where conferences of the vower and his assistants were held and whence pro tem laws and regulations, decisions when and whether to move camp, and so forth, were issued.

The vower's chief assistants in these matters were his own age-group or company, a component sub-group of either the Wolves or the Stars. Whether all the Wolves or Stars respectively, and not merely the vower's own age-group, were divided into "talls" and "shorts" (see below), and served as soldiers or "police" during the dance, to enforce attendance, order in the buffalo hunt and so forth, is a point we could not clear up, but more probably only the members of his own age-group.

[561 707] For either the vower's age-group, or perhaps, as just noted, all the Stars or Wolves respectively of which his age-group was a component sub-group, four head officers or "generals" or "lieutenants" were chosen, and also two subordinate officers or "servants" or attendants. The two tallest of the four head officers took the taller men of the age-group (or of the larger society, Stars or Wolves) as their soldiers, and one of the two subordinate officers; the two shortest, the shorter men, and the other subordinate officer. The two divisions, the "talls" and the "shorts," constituted the "soldiers" or "police" for the dance. Each division also had an outstanding old man as herald or crier.

[224] After the people had all been gathered together, the first task was that of gathering food supplies, buffalo meat and particularly

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buffalo tongues, for the celebration. The vower and his assistants would through their crier announce to the people whether the camp would move for good hunting. On the march, the vower and his company took their place in line immediately after the sacred Pipes. No one was allowed to hunt or run the buffalo until the signal was given.

During the hunt there would be foot and horse races, shooting contests and gambling matches between the "talls" and "shorts." The losers in the gambling would have to "cook," that is, to provide a meal for the winners, a feast at which the rest of the people, including the children, would horn in. Each one of the losers had to furnish some food or clothing and a smoke (not the pipe itself) to the winners. If one of the losers failed to bring a filled pipe along with the food or clothing wager, the wager was rejected, but he was given a chance to go get one. The winners kept track of the losers, and if any of the latter failed to pay up, they would not do anything to him at once while they were sitting around eating. But afterwards, the winners, followed by the rest of the people, would go to the lodge of the delinquent loser, who usually did not and dared not run away. Here the enemy-friend of the loser would take the latter out of his lodge, and lay him on a spread robe or blanket. The winners would then carry him to the stream or river, give him a good swing and throw him into the water. All the people would follow to see the fun, and the young boys would pelt him with buffalo chips. The victim had to take it all good naturedly and not lose his temper, and the crowd had a good laugh. If the loser were not in his lodge when the winners arrived, they would fetch water, and his enemy-friend would give the loser's bed a good drenching.

The hunt continued, the group moving here and there, until enough tongues and other meat was collected, the tongues having been turned over to the vower to be jerked by his wife or wives. Then came the earlier-mentioned four whole nights of singing, done either on successive nights, or from time to time as the tribe moved toward the spot selected for the Sacrifice Dance. After arrival there the fourth of the four all-night singings took place, marking the first night or beginning of the Dance proper, which

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*796 occupied a continuous four-day (or three-day and four-night) period.

782 At some time during the preparatory period, prior to the start of the dance proper, the principal vower's ceremonial grandfather
*796 taught him how to dance with the sacred wheel which was in one sense the main ritual object used in the Sacrifice Dance. One such
778 wheel, we were told, is still in existence, in the possession of Mrs. Grace Stevens, but we did not have an opportunity to see it. It was vaguely described to us as being not a "woven wheel" but only a "hoop" with some down feathers attached to it. In dancing with the wheel, the dancer sang and with his right arm hanging down held the wheel in his right hand and swung it back and forth. When he tired of swinging it in his right hand he changed it behind his back to his left and swung it. When the Sacrifice Dance proper began, the principal vower was given possession of it for the duration, with the full right to carry and swing it whenever during the rite he danced and to otherwise use it. If one of the other dancers weakened and fainted from hunger, thirst, fatigue or pain, the principal vower would go to him and pass the wheel back and forth in front of the unconscious man's face, and would so revive him. Whether other vowers than the principal one could ever dance with the wheel we did not discover.

*796 Those who "joined" the dance, at least the principal and associate vowers, had to refrain from sexual intercourse for a while,
[834] say two or three nights, before the dance proper began.

The morning after the last of the four nights of singing began the ceremonial "scouting" for felling and fetching of the center pole of the dance lodge.

Early that morning, four prominent warriors, men who had been successful as scouts in sighting the enemy and bringing back information, were selected to go look for a center pole. Each had to put on his war accoutrements as if he were setting out on a war expedition. While the four were gone, those who had sent them gathered buffalo chips and put them in a pile. The four scouts on returning announced their approach by giving a special yell, and the people would say: "The scouts are coming." As the four approached closer to the waiting crowd who were ranged in a half-

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769 —rather than the power-giving being who bestows upon the
787 recipient power the latter can use at will without having recourse to or summoning the original donor. No historical interpretation is here being suggested. It looks, instead, that Little Man's deviant power in the case was merely an idiosyncratic variant of the ghost helper concept to which, not wishing to assume the normal public offices of persons with ghost helpers, he attached to curing functions not for all ailments but for ailments caused by ghosts.

Personal Supernatural Powers

787 Supernatural power was acquired by an individual mostly for
778 success in war, accumulation of wealth, doctoring, gambling or love. It was obtained more commonly by quest, although often without quest, and could be transferred by sale, gift or bequest. It was bestowed by many different kinds of beings,—mostly quadrupeds, birds, snakes, rocks; in some cases, ghosts, indeterminate "persons" or "spirits." How and from whom power was acquired differed appreciably in accordance with the several above-listed kinds of power. These differences we shall describe later in detail under these several categories: war, wealth, doctoring, gambling and love. Before doing so, we shall deal with certain characteristics more or less common to all the above five categories.

782 In general, the Gros Ventres distinguished between three chief
869 methods of fulfilling their desires and wants: natural ability, prayer and power. A person was supposed to make best use of his native physical and mental endowments to acquire skills, to use his wits, to develop his capacities and personality,—in a word, to rely on himself and to stand on his own feet, whether as food-getter, craftsman, warrior, gambler, or what not. His second recourse, where his inborn and acquired abilities fell short or threatened to fall short of enabling him to fulfill his wishes and needs, was prayer, primarily although by no means exclusively to the Supreme Being. The third choice, in the ideal order, was resort to power.

Turn Toes, for instance, as an orphaned boy used to be advised

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by his grandfather: "Do not seek doctoring power, but pray to the Supreme Being. This is enough." 782 869

According to The Boy, "Parents in advising their children how to conduct their lives would counsel them: 'Do not have ambition to have power like medicine men, else you will not live long. A medicine man forfeits his prospects of a long life and dies soon [a point to which we shall return presently]. It is far better and safer to just pray, that is, pray to the Supreme Being, and pray all the time. Make prayer the guiding rule in your lives.' Some people acquire power either by sleeping out on the hills or without seeking it. In either case they have to pay the price in shortened, restricted, danger-beset lives. The most important thing of all is to pray, beg, plead. This makes by far for the most happy and good life. This is far above seeking power."

On another occasion, The Boy explained the situation as follows: "However great or renowned these men and women with powers were in the old days, and however much they enjoyed the powers sought by and conferred upon them, they (the powers) were all right only while they lasted. The old-time Gros Ventres knew definitely that people who had these various powers would not live out their full span of life. Parents when raising their children would tell them to avoid that kind of life. They would exert all the influence in instructing their children not to go out on hills and seek power, but to have ambition to acquire fame and respect from exercise of natural ability. They tried to school their children along these lines and [to teach them] that it was considered weak to have the powers from these sources,—from rat, mountain, prairie chicken, and so forth. This my father, Lame Bull, told me all the time, and all the rest of the people told their sons and daughters this same rule of life. And the criers with [203] the chiefs of the tribe, when they walked around on a nice calm day, would surely go into this matter, making it perhaps the main subject of their lecture. But still it [power seeking] was done, against such advice and against better judgment and better experience. All of these fellows who had these powers died prematurely."

Thomas Main had many times heard his grandfather, Lame Bull,

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say: "It is not good to ask that kind of a career [from powers]. It would be a life misspent and would be dearly paid for. Man's dearest possession is life, and this would be cut off."

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Charles Buckman had heard old men say that, although they had fasted and prayed over and over again for power, they had never had even a dream, and that this may have been why they had lived to old age.

According to The Boy, his father Lame Bull, when a young man, dreamed that the being who lived on Baldy Butte in the Bear Paw Mountains called him. So on one occasion when the Gros Ventres were camped near this butte, Lame Bull thought this was a good time to accept the invitation and go up on this butte and sleep. He was getting ready to do so, when his father gave him a sound scolding: "I always told you not to try to be a holy man, a man with power of that kind. Those who have such power do not live long. Forget about sleeping on the mountain and attend to the horses and lodge poles. We need you at home. Mind your own business. So Lame Bull did not get to sleep on the mountain. His father was boss."

Coming Daylight came back repeatedly to the same theme. "I am not a medicine woman [with power] and that is why I have lived to be such an old woman." "I am not sorry I refused the medicine power offered me in a dream. Medicine people die soon. It seems like they have a certain time to die and they don't live to be old like myself and Singer. These medicine people are not strong like others." "I never accepted any kind of power. Those who have power die too soon." "They [the beings] used to trick people into taking all these things [powers] because they wanted them to die. The holy dreams are very tricky."

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Singer gave her own experience. "I used to take a blanket or other offering and put it in deep water and pray that they [apparently the water monsters] would have pity on me. One night after I had just done this I dreamed that a person was standing there and that nearby lay the emaciated body of one who was very very sick. This person told me: 'I give you my body.' This is the way a being puts it in a dream when going to bestow power. Then the person showed me how to doctor, he used a pipe-stem which

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787 539 door down, the man shot it. It just writhed and he emptied his whole gun on it.

"He stayed there until the morning. In the morning he started to holler for the people. They saw this big snake and burned it up. They thought this man very brave."

787 Of equal importance with isolation was concentration of thought. "If," said The Boy, "while on the mountain top the quester was thinking about his wife or about other affairs, he would get nothing [no power] for he did not have his mind on it —If a person is playing cards he must keep his mind on playing else he will not win. In like manner, when a man was fasting out on a mountain he had to concentrate his mind on what he was after—He went there to pray, to ask for help for something above the human."

787 782 The first ritual act after arrival at the mountain top was the prayer with the pipe. This rite was described by The Boy and Thick as follows: "When a Gros Ventre went out in the mountains to seek power he always took along a pipe to use in prayer. He asked from above that the being who owned the mountain or hilltop would be commanded to grant this power. He took the pipe along to pray to the Supreme Being,—it was the idea that the Supreme Being ruled everything but his ruling was systematic or by plans. He seemed to believe that there were lesser beings who sort of managed [ruled] details of the whole situation. He [the quester] would start out, in his very first prayer [by praying] to the Supreme Being asking the granting of his petition, so that the one to whom he went, the one who owned or lived in the hill would be sort of forced or commanded to grant the power that was being requested. The pipe was first offered, with the stem pointing upward to the Supreme Being. Then the quester lit it and blew the smoke upward [toward the Supreme Being] and afterwards downward to the Last Child. But there was no comparison between the up and the down prayer. He held the stem pointing downward to the Last Child to give him a smoke. The Last Child was of the order of the killdeer [vastly inferior to the Supreme Being]. After giving the smoke to the Last Child in a sort of important way, he would offer the pipe to the hill, with the stem pointing not

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upward or downward but to the hill, with a ritual gesture and would make his request direct to the one or ones inhabiting the hill or mountain top and tell this one or these ones what [power] he actually wanted."

In all the above the quester was following the general ritual and social Gros Ventre pattern for making requests. Such was the ritual pattern in prayer with a pipe. And whenever a pipe was offered to a fellow-tribesman it was offered with the stem toward him. The offering of a pipe to another when asking something of him was an "emphatic way of pleading." Thomas Main here remarked: "If I wanted to borrow money of another and were afraid my request would not be granted, I might offer him a pipe when asking for the loan and so reinforce my request."

Bull Lodge, when seeking power on a butte, made offerings of material goods and of the first joint of his left little finger. Little Man made offerings of a bit or bits of his flesh.

While up on the mountains the quester, alone and praying and concentrating his thoughts on his quest, would fast, neither eating or drinking, and would walk around crying, shedding real tears. He, or the man who had first accompanied him to the spot and then left him, would make a rude sleeping place of rocks and twigs and branches. This sort of "nest" was called his "call-for-power lodge." When the quester got weak or fatigued or sleepy, he would lie down in this "nest" and doze or sleep. Al Chandler stated: "Their [the quester's] sleep is not sound, any little thing wakens them. They are expecting something all the time and they look for it." Usually power was given during such sleep, although in some instances when the quester was wide awake. The power-giving being would speak to the quester and, usually at least, appear to him.

Sometimes a quester would be told by the being whose "house" was the mountain on which the man was questing: "Here is the kind of power I have. This is all I have. That other one [being] has the kind of power you wish. Go over there." And the being would name some other butte or mountain. Thus, for instance, a man going to a given mountain to seek wealth or war power might be offered doctoring power, and if he did not take this

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after a certain period of probation. He, however, broke the rule and doctored before his time was up. A night or so after he had doctored a spider came out of his ears and a thunder-rock out of his mouth, and so he lost his doctoring power.

Occasionally in connection with the power quest the right would be given to the quester to paint his lodge in a particular manner.[13] Among the Gros Ventre such sacred or holy painted lodges were relatively rare and were thought of very highly. We recorded one song (No. 88), a wordless one, which belonged with Bull Lodge's sacred lodge. Bull Lodge had been "invited" to quest for power at Baldy Butte, the highest peak in the Bear Paws. The being who gave him other powers also bestowed upon him his own lodge, with instructions how to paint it and the song to sing while it was being painted. Coming Daylight's father had a sacred lodge around the bottom of which were painted the figures of men, each figure the same and each with a feather in the head. The upper part was painted red. "At the tip of the ears of the lodge were things hanging, and feathers in back. The back part had a cross (morning star) and the sun."[14]

What has been said in the preceding pages about the circumstances of Gros Ventre quest may be illustrated by the following account given by Al Chandler of that of Little Man, his adoptive father:

"When Little Man first went out to seek power, the old medicine man (his tutor in the matter) told him: 'I am going with you.' So when they got out in the hills, maybe a whole day's travel to this place where he wanted to go, this old man asked Little Man where he wanted to go to fast and Little Man chose a place not very far away. So they went together. This old man cut his (Little Man's) flesh, took a pinch,—(some did it 3, 6, or 9 pinches), and prayed each time he cut a bit of flesh off. He told Little Man: 'Nobody is going to come after you until your time is up. If I tell you three days, nobody is coming after you until this time is up. In the meantime use your whole heart and don't get

[13] There was a distinction between the sacred painted lodges and the lodges painted with war deeds. Cf. Flannery, 1953, pp. 68, 102.

[14] For illustrations of sacred painted lodges, see Plate 4.

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CHAPTER VIII

MISCELLANEOUS PRIVATE RITES AND OBSERVANCES

782 789 Besides the ancestral-helper and power rites and observances, there were a great many other private ones,—private in the sense that they were mostly carried out by lone individuals or by small and often exclusive groups. Most of these other private rites and observances expressed, by word and/or act, either petition or gratitude or both to supernatural beings, and hence most were, in the sense in which we are using the term, "religious" rather than "magical." A smaller proportion of them were of the "magical" order, being concerned exclusively with purely impersonal forces or phenomena. In some cases both "religious" and "magical" concepts and attitudes appear to be present; in most cases, either the former or the latter are exclusively present or at least clearly predominant; in a few cases, it is hard to say whether, from the Gros Ventre point of view, we are dealing with the "religious" or the "magical."

In our field work among other Algonquian peoples we have often found that phenomena, which at first looked "magical," turned out later, on deeper penetration into meaning, to be clearly "religious." We suspect that some of the phenomena to be described in the present section as seemingly "magical" would likewise, with fuller knowledge, turn out to be "religious."

That certain given rites and observances may have a dominantly or exclusively "religious" or "magical" coloring undoubtedly depends on different meanings attached to them by different individuals. For instance, The Boy has a more philosophic mind; he seeks unity, systematization, synthesis, meaning; Singer was more pragmatic in her attitude to the supernatural, and little concerned with synthesis and meaning. In more cases than one, what was religious to The Boy may well have been "magical" to Singer. So at least we strongly suspect, although conclusive evidence for our inference cannot be adduced. We may merely add that in our own

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Occidental culture, what some individuals conceive and practice as "religious" is not infrequently conceived and practiced by others as "magical." 782 789

Apart however from all such questions and qualifications, by far the greater proportion of the miscellaneous private rites and observances, to the detailed description of which we now turn, are exclusively or predominantly "religious" rather than "magical." We shall take up in order: wish (or wish-thought), prayer, sacrifice, vows, oaths, dreams and visions, omens, divination, taboos. In general, under the first half dozen captions we shall be dealing more with "religious" phenomena, in the remainder more with "magical" ones, but there are certain overlaps and combinations of the two which will be apparent as we go along.

Wish and Thought: Blessing and Curse

That the Gros Ventres believed in the efficacy, more or less "supernatural," of certain wishes and thoughts about others, of benevolent and malevolent thinking, of—in this sense—blessings and curses, is clear. Exactly how the good or evil wish or thought wrought its effects is not too clear from our field data. 828

The Gros Ventres in general attach great significance to thought and wish. This theme recurs over and over again in their culture. Here are some illustrations. One of the names of the Supreme Being apparently meant: He who rules all by the power of thought. Some medicine men had special power to harm and kill by sheer wish. The Boy, in discussing the question, "Who among the beings, apart from the Supreme Being, known to the Gros Ventres was the most powerful?" finally narrowed his choice down to two, a certain boy and his sister as the most powerful of all. "The boy had power to do things with his eyes. He would only look and the thing happened as he wished, but that was only in combination with his sister. She would do the thinking and then he would do the looking," and the thing would happen, especially as a result of the girl's thinking.[1] The Boy thought long and intensively

[1] See Kroeber, 1907, No. 26, The Deserted Children, especially pp. 104-05. This may be the myth to which The Boy referred. Unfortunately we did not get a complete version from him.

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828 pretty clearly to be operative on its own although along with the [754] "natural" morale-building effect of cheering words. [626]

"There is an old Gros Ventre saying that if a man is ailing and some relative or friend of his comes in and says pleasant things to him or tells him he is going to get well, such a talk helps him. When someone gives the sick person a good talk and sincerely wishes he will get well, then the patient will do his best and get well. If you say unpleasant things to a sick man you will help to kill him. Don't hurt a sick man's feelings. The wish in the case is looked upon as something like a prayer. It has to be really meant. When a person talks that way to you when you are sick, [782] the Supreme Being will look down upon you and help you to get well. If a person is visiting a sick Indian, he will say good things to you, even though he knows you are going to die. A white doctor might say: 'There is not much hope.'

"When 32 years ago I was thought to be dying of appendicitis and had been given up by the doctors, old fellows came in and talked hopefully to me and put new life in me.

"In 1918, when I was ill with the flu, I overheard the doctor say: 'It is only a question of a half-hour. You better get a coffin for him.' Then another fellow, an Indian, came in and said to me: 'Well, what did the doctor tell you?' I said: 'Nothing.' He then said: 'He told that fellow over there that you are going to die. But he is not the governor of death. You are not going to die. You are going to live. You want to live for these children of yours. You are going to get well, and for the sake of these children. And think of the One Above [Supreme Being]. He's going to keep you. That's all I want to say to you. I wish you will be up in a few days.' And he [illegible]t. It took me two years to recover fully."

In one of the songs, No. 67, sung in the Law Enforcers' Dance, the words, "The lead bull, comes in this direction," were explained [782] to us by The Boy as being a "half prayer." The singer was "wishing as hard as he could, so there would be plenty of game, especially buffalo, so the people would not have to go far to hunt."

525 The Gros Ventre, The Boy stated in 1939, "did not pray for 828 success in gambling," but just before a wheel game started, the player would take the wheel in his hand and hold one of the

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828 morale-building or morale-destroying remarks, and into public opinion operating on a purely secular or social level, were conceived of as distinct from these, as having a certain efficacy of their own. Quite clearly, too, such wishing and thinking could be either "good" or "bad," beneficent or maleficent, and mass-wishing or mass-thinking by many or all the people had a particularly powerful effect on the beneficiary or victim. Further, it seems reasonably clear that the more sincere and more fervent the wish, the more it came from the heart, the longer and more intensely it had been thought over and pondered and concentrated upon, the more efficacious it was.

Prayer

782 Prayer is here understood as the expression of position, gratitude, homage, or atonement to suprahuman beings. The expression may be made by word of by act or by both together; if by word, it may be vocal or purely mental. Petitions may be direct or indirect, in the latter case being expressed in an indicative rather than in an imperative form. In all cases the response on the part of the superhuman being or beings addressed is conceived as voluntary, not coerced. Prayer, unlike magic in the sense we have used the latter term, does not have automatic efficacy of its own, and does not force the superhuman being to act as the petitioner desires.

Understood in this broad sense, prayer, by word or act, vocal or mental, direct or indirect, enters into and in fact is the core of all the "religious" as distinct from the "magical" (and "social"), rites described in the preceding chapters and to be described in this present one. For instance, the wish, reported in the immediately preceding pages, may be looked upon as an indirect vocal or mental prayer; sacrifice, to be dealt with presently, as prayer by act, in this case by gift.

Praying had none of the drawbacks of power-seeking or power-possessing. It was urged unreservedly on and practiced by everyone. Its efficacy was universally believed in; at least we recorded no instance or hint of skepticism in the hundreds of references to it made by our informants.

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Sincerity and reverence in praying were *de rigueur.* Deep sincerity and reverence were manifest in all the prayers at which we were present. And praying was never talked about jokingly by our informants. The Boy, on one occasion remarked: "If the Indian was praying he put so much reverence, veneration and faith into it that he would make you cry." Levity or irreverence at prayer were distinctly disapproved, as illustrated by the following incident told us by Singer, which occurred during a severe smallpox epidemic when she was a young girl:

"I was at my grandmother's. She had a big string of beads, and she said to me: 'Now, my grandchild, take this bucket and put these beads in, and you go too,' she said to my (female) cousin. 'Then you must both go to the top of this hill and dig a hole and put the beads in it and bury them. And of course you pray. Tell the Last Born (Last Child), 'I give you this so that I will not get the sickness (smallpox) and so that I will live to a good old age. You both pray!' So I did as I was told. But my cousin got to giggling and laughing, although I was sincere and meant every word I said. I don't know why my cousin thought it was funny, but that is the way she acted. When I got back I told the old woman: 'Grandmother, all the time I was praying and doing what you told me to do, this one here was just giggling as if she were making fun of me.' The old woman said: 'Oh, she should not have done that. I told you both to pray. Now you have spoiled everything. Always be sincere in your prayers. Mean every word you say.' So my cousin got smallpox and died from it. But I am still on earth."

The ritual object most commonly used with prayer was the pipe. A great many examples have been given. No less important than pipe smoking as a medium of prayer was singing. According to Gros Ventre tradition singing was, like smoking, originally sacred. It held a premier place in prayer rites, most of which began with song, each rite having its own song or songs sung only in this rite and in no other.

Three questions regarding prayer remain. Who was prayed to? What was asked for or expressed? When were prayers offered?

As has been emphasized, most prayers were directed first of

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782 all to the Supreme Being, in the sense that he was mentioned first in them, and many were directed exclusively to him. Underlying this custom was the belief that all or most of the "good" things humans wished for came immediately or ultimately from him. As Coming Daylight said: "We always start everything with a prayer to Ixtcibni:həhat, then the sun is mentioned and the Last Child. The old timers still pray but the younger ones who have been to school are rather slack about it."

On Sept. 10, 1939, we had a meal and after it general conference with about ten of the oldest men and a couple of the oldest women present, and with The Boy presiding. Three of these older men, in the course of the long conference lasting all afternoon, spoke on the point as follows:

Spotted Bull: "I have always heard the Gros Ventre speak of Ixtcibni:həhat. I have heard the Four Old Men mentioned in prayer, and also Broken Knife, and also the four ridges or periods of the human life span."

Bull Head, about 80 years old in 1939, and though feeble mentally from age, was explicit enough on this matter: "As far back as I can remember, when the Gros Ventres prayed they began their prayer with Ixtcibni:həhat. They mentioned the Four Old Men, too."

Iron Man I: "The Gros Ventres prayed to Ixtcibni:həhat. They did not pray to or worship the sun as did some of the tribes to the north and west of us."

Thomas Main described as follows the way his old grandfather, still a pagan, used to pray, with use of a pipe when a small group of men would gather "to smoke religiously." He had time and again watched his grandfather praying.

782 788 "He would hold the pipe in both hands, with his left hand palm up under the bowl and his right grasping the stem, and with the stem pointing up, nearly vertical. He would look upward first, and then bow his head and close his eyes. Then he would call on the Supreme Being for whatever he was praying for. He would relate what he wanted, with stress on good health, lots of food, no sickness, then [the same] for his immediate relatives, and last for everybody. . . . He would tell his prayer to the Supreme Being.

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saying, 'I am going to ask for these things,' and then mention them, but he would not dwell very long on them. He would get away as quick as he could and do all his talking farther down [to the beings farther down in the scale] out of awe and reverence. 782 788

"After his prayer to the Supreme Being, he would lower the stem of the pipe a little and would pray to the Four Old Men in a body, and ask them for what was needed. This was the main body of his prayer. He would ask them to obtain these things from the Supreme Being. This was the longest part of the prayer.

"Finally he would reverse the pipe bowl with the stem pointing downward and with the tip of the stem as near to touching the ground as possible, without touching it, and would say just a short prayer to the Last Child, who is the least of all the beings. This prayer was shorter than the one to the Many Sacred Beings.

"Then he would straighten up. And all the others who during the pipe prayer had sat with heads bowed, reverent, without looking around, would straighten up too and would say: 'Ei:' (except the one who prayed), which means, in a general sense, may it be so, may it turn out so, we hope thus."

After this the pipe was lit and passed around. Thomas Main added: "The person [his grandfather] would say in his prayer, 'I am not worthy to pray, but I have been called upon to do it,' and would add, 'My being a poor unfortunate old man is all the more reason why my prayer should be heard.'"

Many other beings besides the Supreme Being were prayed to as is evident from the many examples already given. Certain prayers as recorded by us were directed to sacred objects. When Coming Daylight, for example, was disposing of the two rattles belonging to Roasted In Coals' sacred pipe, she prayed to them: "Have pity on us. I pity you because you are not even wrapped up. I take my robe to wrap you in. You are poor like orphans." 782

Thus we have prayers of petition directed to creatures, in this case material though sacred objects, with no mention of the Supreme Being. Was this merely a sort of verbal short cut? Catholics, for instance, frequently word prayers by such short cuts, to the Saints or even to sacred objects, without mention of God,

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●782 and commonly use the expression "praying to the Saints," although they explicitly believe as a fundamental sense of their faith that God alone can answer prayers and Saints however exalted cannot do so. What is idiomatically expressed as "praying to the Saints" actually means "asking the saints to pray to and intercede with God" for the petitioner. Objects however sacred cannot answer prayers but are only symbols and material media of prayer. Have we something similar here, a sort of mental or verbal corner-cutting, in Gros Ventre practice? The question is more easily asked than answered. On the one hand, there is the basic Gros Ventre concept that ultimately all good things come from the Supreme Being. And we would feel sure that from our numerous free interviews with men like The Boy, these men would look upon the prayers we are talking about as "short cuts" only. On the other hand, in the case of the two old women, Coming Daylight and Singer, with their habitual pragmatic concreteness, for the time being at least the lower-order being or the sacred object may have been thought of as able directly to answer prayer. Perhaps different concepts prevailed among different individuals, with some of the concepts not logically consistent with basic Gros Ventre concept above-mentioned which was seemingly shared by everyone.[8]

What did the Gros Ventres pray for? Mostly, it is clear from the numerous prayers we recorded and from explicit statements by informants, for continued and long life, for abundance of food and for good health--and these for the petitioner, for his children and relatives, and for the whole tribe. These petitions recur again and again, in general terms or else, a little less frequently, in more specific ones.

Some typical petitions under the above rubric occurring as parts of prayers recorded are as given in informants' statements: "That there may be no sorrow or suffering in the entire family [of the young man being prayed for by an elder], that they may have life

[8] In our other ethnological sources for many or most other peoples of the world we have very little detailed and dependable information on the subject of native conceptions of the dependent or independent power in sacred objects for answering prayers proper (as distinct from magical use) addressed to them. The subject is wide open for investigation in the field.

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long, that the household would stand firm and right, that the children would be healthy and good and successful;" "that you won't be sick, that you will be successful in all your undertakings, including hunting and everything;" "good health, lots of food, no sickness," for the petitioner, his immediate relatives, and everybody; "good health [for myself] and good health for my children so they will grow up to be strong;" "long life;" "long life and to get things-food-easy;" "that he [a boy in this case] would be healthy, live to old age, and everything like that."

Blessings of the material and physical order, to ensure long life and abundance, seemed to be most frequently sought. Some of the social order, especially those connected with warfare, came next. Thus, to cite some typical petitions: "that he [a boy in the case] will be a big chief, that he will get the best of his enemy, bring big horses;" "getting a gun, success in war, that they may not get shot."

Absent so far as we could discover were two kinds of prayer common in Christian practice: prayer for a happy future life and prayer for moral strength, for help from the Supreme Being to live up to ethical ideals and to overcome temptation. Nor was forgiveness for moral delinquencies asked in prayer. We did, however, record an occasional instance of atonement rite and forgiveness prayer for purely ritual error, neglect or failing in connection with the Flat Pipe. A co-keeper who carried the Pipe bundle forward instead of stem forward or who hung the wrong way on its tripod had to be ritually cleansed, so too a man who gambled with the keeper. Coming Daylight recently prayed the Flat Pipe to forgive the people attending a Pipe-opening rite that was incorrectly carried out.

Before passing on to the question as to when were prayers offered, we may here give some examples of longer prayers said on more important occasions. Such prayers tended to take a certain flexible pattern,[8] beginning always with an invocation of the Supreme

[8] The use of the term "stock prayer" by Cooper, 1940, p. 103, to designate these prayers was not so happy, as it may have given the impression to others, as it did to some of our Gros Ventre informants, that the prayer always conformed to a rigid and inflexible pattern.

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782 Being. The things asked for in the prayer would differ according to the occasion.

782 583 [123] At the elaborate naming feast at which Flannery was adopted and given her name the following two prayers offered by The Boy who was in charge of the ceremony may serve as examples of these longer solemn prayers of which we are here speaking. As The Boy makes it a practice to plan carefully whatever he intends to utter in public, we may be reasonably sure that he had given much thought ahead of time to the form and content of these two prayers.

Before partaking of the lunch which was an integral feature of the naming rite, The Boy took a piece of bread and standing held it aloft while he prayed as follows before depositing a bit of the bread in each of the four corners of the stage of the community hall where the rite was held:

553 782 539 "Supreme Being, look down upon us as we sit here today. We are going to eat of the food which you gave to us. We are glad. We are thankful for this gift of food that we are going to eat. Whenever we, your children, displease you and do things contrary to your law, forgive us for these, we pray you. Also look down upon us here today as we sit together and help us to successfully portray our poor life which you have allowed us to live by for so many ages. We have reached the end of that long trail of life that you have allowed us to live by, and bowing to your will we accept the conditions of today, different as they may be from yesterday, because this is your will. And in your mercy and consideration for our conducted [sic] life and assistance, give us food, give us breath, so that we may live out our lives according to your plan. And protect, watch over our loved ones who are participating and fighting in a terrible war,[4] so that they may come back to us safe and unhurt, so that once more they may set their feet upon the soil of their birthplace. This is their heritage."

After lunch and some smoking and chatting The Boy called all to order. Then, seated, he held a pipe stem pointed upward and finally downward and prayed:

"Master of All, of the above and of the below and of the entire

[4] This refers to the many Gros Ventre young men then, 1945, in the armed forces while World War II was still going on.

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universe, and you the Four Old Men, here is a pipe that we are inviting you to place [take? accept?] and look upon our gathering here today. We, your poor creatures, are desperately trying to carry on and preserve, as one of our traditions, this way [with a pipe] of drawing your attention and your ear. Even though we are old and are reaching and going rapidly towards the sunset of our lives, help us to finish our lives so that we may die of old age. We ask you to look down upon White Shield [Cooper]. In your mercy have consideration for his welfare. Restore him to full health, so that he too may live out his life in good health and peace of heart and mind with us and that he may complete the great work of recording the history of the life of the Gros Ventres and that it may be a true record of that former life and that it may be worthy to be taken in as an annal of history. Then we ask you too to look down upon this white woman [Flannery] who is the representative of White Shield. They together have made possible one portion [of the food] so necessary to make this gathering a success. We ask that these two, White Shield and this woman, may live out their lives with us, and that this white woman in particular may successfully record that portion of the history of the old Gros Ventres that she has been assigned to do and that during her stay [here] so far from her home she may enjoy health, happiness and peace and that she may arrive back safe to her home. And you, the Last Child, of whom it is said to be revealed to us that you have control of the water, look upon our sons and grandsons [those in the armed services in World War II] who are far from home today and who are going to the far corners of the earth over water, fighting to maintain this way of life, protect them when they go over the water so that they may come back home safe."

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After this prayer the pipe was passed around ceremonially. Thomas Main, who translated the prayer, which like the preceding one was said by The Boy in Gros Ventre, explained that after mentioning the Four Old Men The Boy had left out He Who Starved To Death who ordinarily was addressed after the Four in Flat Pipe rites. "He, while a great human being, was only a human being and so on a history-making occasion like this one his name was not invoked."

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This last prayer was said while World War II was still in progress. After it was over and the Gros Ventre young men had returned from service in the armed forces, a very solemn ritual opening of the Flat Pipe was held, on February 6, 1946,—at which unfortunately neither of us could be present. The School Sisters of St. Francis, however, who teach the elementary and secondary grades at the Mission of St. Paul, Hays, were present and took careful notes of the proceedings which they afterwards wrote up and hectographed. Early in the rite, before actually opening the Flat Pipe bundle, The Boy, who had charge of the ceremony, held up a pipe and prayed in Gros Ventre as follows, the prayer being translated for the Sisters by Thomas Main and being preceded by a brief explanatory word by The Boy:

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"I will now speak in the first person and give you a prayer [such as] our Gros Ventre forefathers prayed in times of distress to the Turtle who reposes in this [Flat Pipe] bundle and to the Maker of the earth:

"Supreme Being, look down upon me, a poor mortal person, as I pray to You, and appeal to You, in this time of great distress and disturbance among your children, the peoples of this earth.

"I pray to You, a poor and lowly Indian, in the spirit and way that my ancestors prayed to You. I ask that the fires of hatred subside among all men, and that they may now love one another and understand that they are all brothers and must share the handiwork of Your hand, creation, the universe, and all nature. I ask that You may inspire the representatives of the peoples of the earth who are now engaged in a most difficult task, the framing of the terms of peace, so that it may be just and lasting.

"Supreme Being, I asked You to watch over and take care of my grandchildren, the young men of the Indian people, as they went off to all the corners of the earth to fight in the greatest war and conflict of all time for the cause of freedom and liberty, and now that they are back safe to those near and dear to them I feel that You have listened to and granted my prayer. Now, My Father, I ask you again to give to my grandchildren, the veterans of the great war just ended, peace of mind, happiness, good health, and a long life. And that they enjoy the soil of their birth and the land